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INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY



Balloon Parade
In San Nicolas!



See Page 13!

Powell defends Obama's pick for defense



Former Secretary of State Colin Powell talks to reporters at the State Department in Washington. Powell threw his support behind President Obama's choice for secretary of defense, Chuck Hagel, on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," Sunday, January 13, 2013.

BRIAN KNOWLTON
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President Barack Obama's
nominee for secretary of

defense, Chuck Hagel, re-
ceived a resounding vote
of support on Sunday from
a fellow Republican mod-

erate, Colin L. Powell, who
said Hagel, a former sena-
tor from Nebraska, was "su-
perbly qualified" to lead

(Doug Mills/The New York Times)
the Pentagon.

Continued on Page 5

French jets bomb major Malian city

**BABA AHMED
R. CALLIMACHI
Associated Press**

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) — French fighter jets bombed rebel targets in a major city in Mali's north Sunday, pounding the airport as well as training camps, warehouses and build-

ed at least five towns, of which Gao, which was attacked Sunday afternoon, is the largest. More than 400 French troops have been deployed to the country in the all-out effort to win back the territory from the well-armed rebels, who seized control of

French President Francois Hollande authorized the intervention after it became clear the swiftly advancing rebels could break Mali's military defenses in Mopti, the first town on the government-controlled side, located in the center of this African country. The move catapulted the world into a fight that diplomats had earlier said would not take place until at least September. "French fighter jets have identified and destroyed this Sunday, Jan. 13, numerous targets in northern Mali near Gao, in particular training camps, infrastructure and logistical depots which served as bases for terrorist groups," the French defense ministry said in a statement.

French officials have acknowledged that the rebels are better armed than they expected, and one of the first fatalities was a 41-year-old French pilot, whose helicopter was downed by rebel fire near the town of Konna.

The Islamists, including three separate rebel groups, all of which have either direct or indirect ties to al-Qaida, are armed with weapons stolen from the abandoned arsenal of ex-Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi. □



A French soldiers patrol under the Eiffel tower, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013. France has ordered tightened security in public buildings and transport following action against radical Islamists both in Mali and Somalia, French President Francois Hollande said.

(AP Photo/Michel Euler)

ings used by the al-Qaida-linked Islamists controlling the area, officials and residents said. Now in its third day, the French-led effort to take back Mali's north from the extremists began with airstrikes by combat helicopters in the small town of Konna. It has grown to a coordinated attack by state-of-the-art fighter jets which have bombard-

an area larger than France nine months ago. What began as a French offensive has now grown to include seven other countries, including logistical support from the U.S. and Europe. The United States is providing communications and transport help, while Britain is sending C17 aircrafts to help Mali's allies transport troops to the frontlines.



Egyptians supporters of ousted former President Hosni Mubarak celebrate an appeal granted by a court, in Cairo, Egypt, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013. A court granted Hosni Mubarak's appeal of his life sentence in a Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013 hearing, ordering a retrial of the ousted Egyptian president. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Egypt court overturns Mubarak's conviction

**DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK
© 2013 New York Times**

CAIRO — An Egyptian appeals court on Sunday overturned the life sentence of former President Hosni Mubarak for directing the killing of protesters, a ruling that could prolong a politically fraught legal battle over the fate of Egypt's deposed autocrat two years after he was ousted. The court reportedly ordered a new trial. Although expected, the decision may also put the issue of retribution for Mubarak and his inner circle back in the news just as a campaign begins for new parliamentary elections, which are scheduled for April. The court decision may bolster the prospects of the Islamist party of President Mohammed Morsi, who campaigned for president last year on a pledge to seek a retrial of Mubarak, capitalizing on anger over the weak conviction. Even as his opponents had begun collaborating with former members of Mubarak's old party, Morsi has made legal action against leaders of the former government a priority, sometimes suggesting that former colleagues of Mubarak were behind a conspiracy to disrupt the transition to democracy. A ruling that overturned Mubarak's conviction had been considered likely since his conviction last year. The judge who handed down the verdict said at the time that he was

convicting Mubarak on the principle of presidential responsibility even though he had seen no evidence that Mubarak had personally ordered or directed the killings. More than 800 civilians were killed during the three weeks of protests that ended Mubarak's 30-year rule. The court on Sunday erupted in cries of jubilation and protest after the decision was announced. Supporters of Mubarak jumped onto desks in the courtroom to celebrate and a handful of others demonstrated outside.

The appeals court did not immediately disclose its reasoning, but early reports suggested that the court had found procedural problems in the conduct of the original hearings. In an interview with state media, Farid El-Deeb, a lawyer for Mubarak, said that ordering a new trial for the same crimes merely because the prosecution failed to produce any evidence would be impermissible double jeopardy. Mubarak, who has been held in the military hospital because of health concerns, will remain in custody. Perhaps in anticipation of the appeals court decision, prosecutors on Saturday ordered Mubarak's detention for an additional period because of a new investigation that they had started into personal gifts he received from Al Ahram, the state media organization that publishes a newspaper of the same name. □

Japan holds military drill in island dispute

TOKYO (AP) — Japan has conducted a military drill apparently aimed at bolstering defense of islands

at the center of a territorial dispute with China.

The Defense Ministry says it was the first time the

annual drill, held Sunday near Tokyo, was aimed at island defense. Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said Japan must improve its military tactics in light of the dispute with China. He said Chinese aircraft and sea vessels have infringed upon Japanese territory in waters and airspace around the disputed East China Sea islands, called Senkaku in Japan. China also claims the islands, calling them Diaoyu. The Japanese government's purchase of the islands in September triggered violent anti-Japan protests across China. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said his government will increase defense spending to strengthen defense of the islands. □



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, troops of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force 1st Airborne Brigade take part in an military exercise in Narashino Exercise Area in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013. This year, the troops conducted the annual drill on the assumption that an enemy invaded a remote island, local media said.

(AP Photo/Xinhua, Ma Ping)

Israel PM vows to proceed with disputed E-1 settlement

M. DARAGHMEH

Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP)

— Israel's prime minister pledged Sunday to move ahead with construction of a new Jewish settlement in a strategic part of the West Bank, speaking just hours after Israeli forces dragged dozens of Palestinian activists from the area.

The activists pitched more than two dozen tents at the site on Friday, laying claim to the land and drawing attention to Israel's internationally condemned settlement policy. Before dawn Sunday, hundreds of Israeli police and paramilitary border troops evicted the protesters. Despite the eviction, Mustafa Barghouti, one of the protest leaders, claimed success, saying the overall strategy is to "make (Israel's) occupation costly." The planned settlement, known as E-1, would deepen east Jerusalem's separation from the West Bank, war-won areas the Palestinians want for their state. The project had been on hold for years, in part because of U.S. objections. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revived the E-1 plans late last year in response to the Palestinians' successful bid for U.N. recognition of a state of Palestine in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. Jewish settlements are at the heart of the current four-year impasse in Mideast peace efforts. The Palestinians have refused to negotiate while Israel continues to build settlements on the lands they seek for their state. Netanyahu says peace talks should start without any preconditions. He also rejects any division of Jerusalem. Israel expanded the boundaries of east Jerusalem after the 1967 war and then annexed the area — a move not recognized by the international community. Since then, it has built a ring of Jewish settlements in the enlarged eastern sector to cement its control over the city.

E-1 would be built in the West Bank just east of Jerusalem, and would close

one of the last options for Palestinians to create territorial continuity between Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem, their hoped-for capital, and the West Bank. According to building plans, E-1 would have more than 3,000 apartments.

The Palestinians say they turned to the U.N. last November out of frustration with the deadlock in peace talks. They believe the international endorsement of the 1967 lines will bolster their position in negotiations. Israel has accused the Palestinians of trying

to bypass the negotiating process and impose a solution. Netanyahu told Israel Army Radio on Sunday that it would take time to build E-1, citing planning procedures. Still, he said, "we will complete the planning, and there will be construction." Asked why the pro-

testers were removed, Netanyahu said, "They have no reason to be there. I asked immediately to close the area so people would not gather there needlessly and generate friction and disrupt public order." Palestinian protest leaders hoped the tent camp would be the first of a new type of well planned, non-violent protests against Israeli policies in the Palestinian territories.

In recent years, Palestinians have staged weekly rallies in some areas of the West Bank, demanding to get back land they lost to Israel's separation barrier. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has held up such tactics as worthy of emulation. The protests have remained relatively small, and media coverage has dropped off over the years. The tent camp was set up after a month of planning by grass-roots groups using Facebook, Google Earth and other tools to find the right spot and stay in touch, said organizer Abdullah Abu Rahma. □



Israeli border police evict Palestinian activists from an area known as E-1 near Jerusalem, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013. Palestinian activists erected tents in the area on Friday saying they wanted to "establish facts on the ground" to stop Israeli construction in the West Bank. The Palestinian activists were borrowing a phrase and a tactic, usually associated with Jewish settlers, who believe establishing communities means the territory will remain theirs once structures are built.

(AP Photo/Nasser Shiyokhi)

Allies, opposition clash at Venezuela rallies

C. TOOTHAKER

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Thousands of supporters of Venezuela's absent, cancer-stricken president held rallies across the nation on Sunday to defend Hugo Chavez's populist "revolution," with a top ally alleging that far-right factions were seeking violent instability.

The opposition says the government's indefinite postponement of Chavez's inauguration, which was to have occurred on Thursday, is unconstitutional and is demanding it lift the veil of secrecy about his medical condition.

The successor Chavez himself designated, Vice President Nicolas Maduro, and other members of Venezuela's ruling inner circle, met Saturday evening in Havana with Raul Castro, Cuba's leader, during a visit to the island nation where the Venezuelan president

remains hospitalized, the nation's Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. Venezuelan authorities have said Chavez contin-

Chavez, who was re-elected on Oct. 7, hasn't spoken publicly or been seen since the operation, and the Cuban and Venezu-

Accompanying Maduro in Saturday's meeting with Raul Castro were Diosdado Cabello, president of Venezuela's National Assembly as well as Attorney General Cilia Flores and Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez. Information Minister Ernesto Villegas announced that Maduro meet with Chavez. "Maduro reports that he gave the president a report about the demonstrations of the people's support," Villegas stated on Saturday in a message posted on the Twitter social networking site.

Cuba's official Juventud Rebelde newspaper published a photograph of a smiling Castro with Cabello and Ramirez.

In another picture, Castro is seen bidding farewell Saturday to Presidents Cristina Fernandez of Argentina and Ollanta Humala of Peru.

If either met with Chavez, it was not reported. □



An opponent of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez wears a message over his mouth that reads in Spanish; "In Venezuela there is a dictatorship," during an outdoor gathering in Caracas, Venezuela.

(AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

ues to fight a severe respiratory infection after undergoing a fourth round of surgery on Dec. 11 for a cancer in the pelvic area first diagnosed on June 8, 2011.

elan governments have refused to offer details of his condition. If he is unable to take office, Venezuela's constitution says new elections must be called within 30 days.



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Some of the few visitors to the beach at Santa Monica, Calif., battle frigid temperatures and strong winds as Southern California bears a weekend-long cold snap.

(AP Photo/Reed Saxon)

California dodges most crop damage during icy cold snap

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Some of California's hottest spots went from sweltering to shivering Sunday as early morning temperatures plunged, leaving even polar bears at the San Diego Zoo seeking shelter. But growers in the Central Valley were relieved to learn most orange and lemon crops probably avoided significant damage for another night despite temperatures in the high 20s Fahrenheit (-4 to -1 Celsius).

"We were just a little bit colder, by a degree or two," said spokesman Paul Story of California Citrus Mutual, a growers' trade association. "For the navel oranges, that's not cold enough to do a measurable amount of damage." A possible exception was the smaller, more fragile mandarin orange.

"We might see a bit of damage in the mandarin crop," Story said. "I talked to our major mandarin people, and it's not significant yet."

It was the third night of successful crop protection for farmers, who run wind machines and water to protect their fruit, but growers weren't done yet.

"We've got at least one more night of cold temperatures," Story said.

Two of the hottest spots in the Los Angeles area — the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys — saw sub-freezing predawn temperatures Sunday.

Famously torrid Woodland Hills, which usually makes news for its triple-digit Fahrenheit (above 38 degrees Celsius) temperatures, had an overnight low of 30 degrees F (-1 degrees Celsius). That was warm compared to Lancaster in north Los Angeles County, which hit 15 degrees F (-10 C).

Temperatures reached the low 20s F (-6 to -4 C) in the San Francisco Bay area.

In the East Bay city of Walnut Creek, the National Weather Service reported an overnight low of 23 degrees F (-5 degrees C), while in the Santa Clara County community of Scotts Valley, the temperature dropped to 26 F (-3 C). Forecasters said even with a day of sunshine, temperatures across the Bay Area were expected to get no higher than the low 50s F (10 to 13 C) Sunday.

Meanwhile, in the Sierra Nevada, temperatures plunged below zero F (-18 C) overnight, and after a day in the 20s F (-6 to -1 C), another subzero night is expected. In San Diego, zookeepers offered extra heat and shelter for some animals, including polar bears. While the bears tolerate frigid climates, the zoo animals lack the fat layers that naturally occur in the wild to protect them from the cold, so zookeepers offer them "warming apparatuses," zoo spokeswoman Jenny Mehlow said.

"The animals do take this in stride because they're wearing a nice, warm fur coat," she said.

The cold air was flowing east into neighboring Arizona, where metropolitan Phoenix was approaching the halfway point in a four-day cold snap that's expected to mark the coolest stretch the area has seen since 1988. Temperatures on Saturday night dipped to 30 degrees F (-1 C) at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

Low temperatures across Arizona on Saturday night included 23 F (-5 C) at Tucson International Airport and 7 below F (-21 C) in Flagstaff. □

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Priest, ex-teacher face sex trial in Philadelphia

MARYCLAIRE DALE

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A troubled policeman's son who accuses two Roman Catholic priests and a teacher of raping him during boyhood is set to testify at a Philadelphia trial this week — and have his startling claims challenged for the first time.

The young man, identified by the pseudonym Billy in a 2011 grand jury report, testified in a landmark priest-abuse case last year. But in a strategic move, lawyers for the church official on trial never cross-examined him.

Monsignor William Lynn's lawyers doubted Billy's story, but they feared their questions would open the door for jurors to learn that one of the accused priests had taken a plea deal.

Lynn later became the first U.S. church official ever convicted over his han-

dling of abuse complaints. He's serving three to six years in prison for endangering Billy's safety by moving the Rev. Edward Avery, encounter with Avery. "I didn't think anyone would believe me."

The other two rape suspects go on trial Monday, and Billy's credibility — under potentially fierce cross-examination — may determine the outcome.

The Rev. Charles Engelhardt, an Oblate of St. Francis, and Bernard Shero, Billy's sixth-grade teacher, have pleaded not guilty to rape, indecent assault, child endangerment and other charges. Both Engelhardt, 66, of Wyndmoor, and Shero, 49, of Levittown, rejected plea offers of 7½ to 15 years in prison, and face far more time if convicted.

A gag order prevents them or their lawyers from commenting on the case. In the adult Billy, the jury will see an accuser who's spent much of his life battling drugs, alcohol and arrests for petty crimes. □



Rev. Charles Engelhardt walks from the Criminal Justice Center in Philadelphia. Engelhardt is set to go on trial Monday, Jan. 14, 2013, on charges he raped an altar boy in northeast Philadelphia in the late 1990s. Engelhardt has pleaded not guilty.

(AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

a suspected pedophile, to St. Jerome's Parish.

"I thought I did something wrong — and it's a priest," Billy testified about his 1999

Powell defends Obama's pick

Continued from front

"I think he will make a very, very spirited defense of his position — and I think he'll be confirmed," Powell, a former secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on the NBC News program "Meet the Press."

Republicans have been criticizing Hagel since his name began circulating as the possible nominee, and the criticism continued on the Sunday morning political talk shows.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona, on the CBS News program "Face the Nation," said Hagel's early opposition to the troop surge in Iraq was "bizarre."

He said he would have many questions for Hagel when he appears before the Armed Services Committee for confirmation hearings. McCain is the committee's ranking Republican.

Another Republican, Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, appeared to open a new front on Sunday against Hagel, saying that he had questions about his "over-

all temperament."

Corker, who is not on the Armed Services Committee and said that he did not know Hagel well, offered little elaboration. But he said that there were "numbers of staffers who are coming forth now just talking about the way he has dealt with them."

Corker's comments on the ABC News program "This Week" seemed to suggest that he considered Hagel — who has a reputation for speaking his mind — overbearing or erratic.

Until now, Hagel has been criticized mainly for what some lawmakers and interest groups consider his overly cautious attitude toward Iran and his tough approach on Israel. But Powell said that Hagel had shown that it was possible to be "a good supporter of Israel" while still criticizing it. Being pro-Israel, Powell said, "doesn't mean you have to agree with every single position that the Israeli government takes."

Hagel's past reference to "the Jewish lobby" has been widely criticized, and he has apologized for it. □

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Colorado center stage in gun law debate

JACK HEALY
DAN FROSCHE

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DENVER — With politicians in Washington deeply divided over new gun regulations, an urgent national debate ignited by the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School is storming into state legislatures across the country. And nowhere is that debate more emotionally charged or politically consequential than here in Colorado, a reluctant crucible for the battle over guns.

This state, one of hunters and sport-shooters, has endured two of the most horrific mass shootings in U.S. history, and this year for the first time in more than a decade it could pass major gun-control legislation.

Gun-control advocates say it is a moment forged in part by a massacre inside a suburban Denver movie theater that left 12 people dead. But it is also one created by demographics, of population shifts that have nudged the political center left while transforming traditionally rural, conservative swaths of the West. "We've had it with mass shootings," said Beth McCann, a Democratic state representative. "People just don't want to hear about another massacre. This is enough."

To lawmakers and advocates on both sides of the debate, Colorado is becoming a national test case for what kind of gun regulations — if any — can gather support from lawmakers, law enforcement officials and a public whose relationship with guns has been forged by tradition as much as tragedy. This is a place where even the horrors of the 1999 attack at Columbine High School in

suburban Denver only temporarily shifted the debate on guns. In 2000, Colorado voters passed new restrictions on purchases made at gun shows, but a few years later, the Legislature relaxed gun laws by making it easier for people to carry concealed weapons and also limited towns and cities from passing strict gun laws.

Gun ownership here crosses generations and political divisions. Liberal Denver lawyers own handguns, and the Democratic gov-

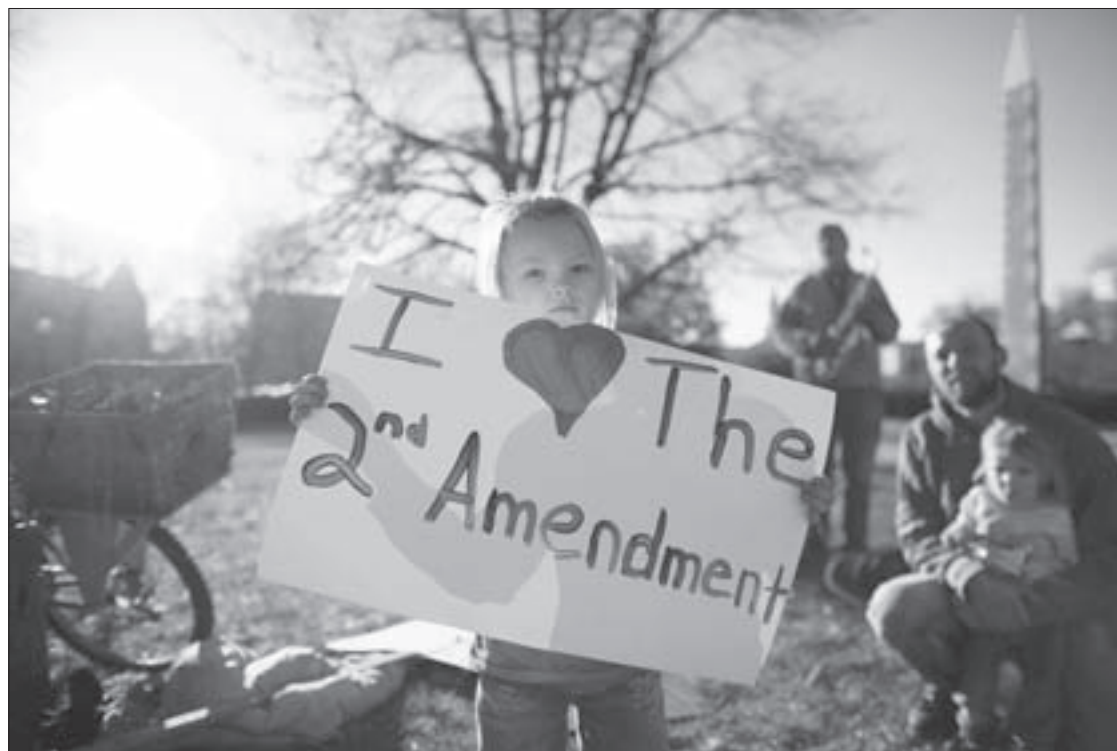
ernment that are far more aggressive than anything likely to pass in Colorado, even with Democrats now in control of the Statehouse.

Gov. John W. Hickenlooper, a first-term Democrat, has called for universal background checks of private, individual gun sales, in addition to the checks now required at gun shows and at retail establishments. But in an interview, Hickenlooper said he was unsure about proposals from Democratic lawmak-

ers to ban high-capacity ammunition magazines. "Even saying that puts some people into a frenzy," Hickenlooper said. "People in the West have a very strong, deeply anchored belief in people's right to bear arms."

That division came into sharp relief when Hickenlooper called for universal background checks in his State of the State address on Thursday. Democrats in one half of the chamber

leapt to their feet and applauded while members of the Republican minority sat in stony silence. Colorado still embraces its history of rugged individualism and the range, but it has never been as conservative as some of its neighbors. "I do think it is important for people to understand that even though we are a Western state and there is a libertarian strain here, I think sometimes people think the gun lobby is maybe more powerful here



Natasha Hayward, 6, holds a poster at a pro-gun rally outside the Colorado State Capitol in Denver. Colorado, where gun ownership crosses political divides, is becoming a national test case for what kind of gun regulations can garner support. (Matthew Staver/The New York Times)

ernor takes his son to hunting safety classes. A popular family shooting range sits in the center of Cherry Creek State Park, drawing some sport-shooters who voted for President Barack Obama, others who insist he is a communist.

As state legislators across the country reconvene, heavily Democratic states like New York, New Jersey and California are considering proposals to restrict assault weapons and am-

munition that are far more aggressive than anything likely to pass in Colorado, even with Democrats now in control of the Statehouse.

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Armstrong awaits candid Oprah talk

JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Out for a Sunday morning jog in bright sunshine, Lance Armstrong hardly looked like a man about to finally confront the doping scandal that has shadowed his storied career like an angry storm cloud.

"I'm calm, I'm at ease and ready to speak candidly," Armstrong told The Associated Press, referring to his interview Monday with Oprah Winfrey.

In what's been billed as a "no-holds barred" session, the cyclist is expected to reverse course after a decade of denials and apologize for doping, as well as offer a limited confession about his role at the head of a long-running scheme to dominate the Tour de France with the aid of performance-enhancing drugs.

Armstrong was stripped of all seven tour titles last year in the wake of a voluminous U.S. Anti-Doping Agency report that portrayed him as a ruthless competitor, willing to go to any lengths to win the prestigious race. "The most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen," is how USADA chief executive Travis Tygart labeled the doping regimen allegedly carried out by the U.S. Postal Service team that Armstrong once led.

Yet if any of that was weighing on Armstrong's mind, he didn't show it early in the day.

Wearing a red jersey and black shorts, sunglasses and a white baseball cap pulled down to his eyes, he was training by himself and about a mile from his home when he talked to the AP. □

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Hitting the debt limit: What bills would be paid?

JIM KUHNHENN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the summer of 2011, when a debt crisis like the current one loomed, President Barack Obama warned Republicans that older Americans might not get their Social Security checks unless there was a deal to raise the nation's borrowing limit.

After weeks of brinkmanship, Republicans consented and Obama agreed to a deficit-reduction plan the Republicans wanted. Crisis averted, for a time. Now that there's a fresh showdown, the possibility of Social Security cuts — and more — is back on the table.

The government could run out of cash to pay all its bills in full as early as Feb. 15, according to one authoritative estimate, and congressional Republicans want significant spending cuts in exchange for raising the borrowing limit. Obama, forced to negotiate an increase in 2011, has pledged not to negotiate again.

Without an agreement, every option facing his administration would be unprecedented.

It would require a degree of financial creativity that could test the law, perhaps even the Constitution.

It could shortchange Social Security recipients and other people, including veter-

ans and the poor, who rely on government programs. In a letter to Obama on Friday, Senate Democratic leaders urged him to consider taking any "lawful steps that ensure that America does not break its promises and trigger a global economic crisis — without congressional approval, if necessary."

The White House has resisted that path. It has rejected recommendations that it invoke a provision in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution that states that "the validity of the public debt of the United States ... shall not be questioned."

"There are only two options to deal with the debt limit: Congress can pay its bills or they can fail to act and put the nation into default," White House press secretary Jay Carney said. "Congress needs to do its job."

So what's left if Congress does not act in time?

Technically, the government hit the debt ceiling at the end of December. Since then, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has halted full payments into the retirement and disability fund for government workers and to the health benefits fund of Postal Service retirees.

The Treasury can stop payments to a special fund that purchases or sells foreign currencies to stabilize

world financial markets. Past administrations have taken such steps to buy time awaiting a debt ceiling increase. That happened under Presidents

Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush. The government restored those funds after Congress raised the debt ceiling.

Those measures and others

could keep the government solvent, perhaps as far as early March, according to an analysis by the Bipartisan Policy Center.

"I happen to think the triage would be chosen to create the maximum amount of political pressure to break the impasse right away, which would be withholding Social Security checks," said Philip Wallach, a fellow at the Brookings Institution. □



The U.S. flag flies next to the Capitol in Washington, as Congress and the Obama Administration continue work to raise the debt ceiling.

(AP Photo/Alex Brandon)



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Thousands of Russians rally against adoption ban

ELLEN BARRY
ANDREW ROTH

© 2013 New York Times

MOSCOW – Thousands of Russians marched Sunday in condemnation of the Russian Parliament's move to ban the adoption of Russian children by U.S. families, an event dubbed a "March Against Scoundrels," where participants chanted, "Take your hands off children," and carried posters showing the faces of lawmakers stamped with the word "Shame." Marchers flooded tree-lined boulevards for many blocks on a bitterly cold day. The police estimated the turnout for the march,

which was sanctioned by city authorities, at 9,500; a group of activists who made a count told Interfax that there were about 24,000 participants. The sight gags and clever slogans of last year's anti-government rallies were absent Sunday, and many participants had emotional answers for why they took part in the march. Many questioned the moral principles of a ban on adoptions by Americans in a country with so many children in foster care or orphanages. "Even I can't afford to adopt, and I'm supposedly middle class," said



Protesters carry portraits of Russian deputies with "Shame" written across their faces, in Moscow, Jan. 13, 2012. Russians marched Sunday in condemnation of the Russian Parliament's move to ban adoption of Russian children by American families. (James Hill/The New York Times)

Yekaterina Komissarova, 31, adding that perhaps the issue angered her so deeply because she was the mother of two children. Another marcher, Tamara Nikolayeva, 62, raised her voice, nearly shouting, as she accused Russian lead-

ers of using orphans as pawns. "They have decided to settle a score by using children, and it's shameful," Nikolayeva said, as her friends gathered around, nodding their encouragement. "OK, maybe at some

point, it will be better not to give our children away; we should take care of them ourselves. But first you have to make life better for them here. Give them a chance to study. Give them a chance to get medical treatment." □

Syrian planes bomb Damascus suburbs

BARBARA SURK
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian fighter jets on Sunday bombed Damascus suburbs in a government offensive to dislodge rebels from strategic areas around the capital, activists said, as clashes raged around army bases and airfields in the country's north. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said warplanes were hitting towns and villages around the capital, while regime forces targeted

other neighborhoods with artillery and mortars. At least nine people were killed when a shell hit eastern Ghouta district, the group said. Also Sunday, Turkish state media said Assad's fighter jets bombed the Syrian town of Azaz near the Turkish border. At least 34 Syrians wounded in the airstrikes were brought across the border to the Turkish province of Kilis for treatment, the state-run Anadolu agency said. Seven died of the in-

juries, the report said. The Observatory said troops were battling rebels in the suburb of Daraya a day after government officials claimed the army had taken much of the strategic area, which lies on the edge of a major military air base southwest of the capital. In northern Syria, government forces were fighting rebels over an air base and the international airport of the city of Aleppo. The airport includes a military base. □

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Italy:

Costa shipwreck families unveil memorials to victims

NICOLE WINFIELD
TRISHA THOMAS
Associated Press

GIGLIO, Italy (AP) — Survivors of the Costa Concordia shipwreck and relatives of the 32 people who died marked the first anniversary of the grounding Sunday with the unveiling of memorials to the victims, a tearful Mass in their honor and a minute of silence to recall the exact moment that the cruise ship rammed into a reef off Tuscany.

One of the most moving tributes came first, with the daybreak return to the sea of part of the massive rock that tore a 70-meter (230-foot) gash into the hull of the ocean liner on Jan. 13, 2012, when the captain took it off course in a stunt. The boulder remained embedded in the mangled steel as the 112,000-ton vessel capsized off Giglio island along with its 4,200 passengers and crew.

As fog horns and sirens wailed, a crane on a tug lowered the boulder back onto the reef off Giglio where it belonged, returning it to the seabed affixed with a memorial plaque. Relatives of the dead threw flowers into the sea and embraced as they watched the ceremony

from a special ferry that bobbed in the waves under a gray sky. They wept during the Mass and ran their fingers over the names of the 32 dead that were engraved on a bronze plaque unveiled at the end of Giglio's jetty,

at 9:45 p.m., the exact moment when the Concordia slammed into the reef after Capt. Francesco Schettino took it off its pre-programmed course and brought it closer to Giglio as a favor to friends from the island.

opened their homes and hearts to the survivors that frigid night.

"Having the possibility to see everything, we can accept it a bit more, but there is still a long way to overcome this loss, especially

ship.

Schettino is accused of manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and leaving the ship before all passengers were evacuated.

He hasn't been charged but is living under court-ordered restrictions pending a decision on whether to indict him. Schettino maintains he saved lives by bringing the ship closer to shore rather than letting it sink in the open sea, and claims the reef he hit wasn't on his nautical charts.

In an interview broadcast Sunday with RAI state television, Schettino again defended his actions and blamed others on the bridge for failing to inform him of the situation in time, and then of botching his orders once he tried to steer clear of the reef.

He said he wanted to "share in the pain of all the victims and the families of the victims."

At Schettino's home in Meta di Sorrento, on the Gulf of Naples, no one answered the doorbell Sunday and the window shutters were closed.

Taking part in the anniversary commemoration was Capt. Gregorio De Falco of the Italian coast guard, who became something of a hero to survivors after his recorded conversations with Schettino during the evacuation were made public. In them, De Falco excoriated Schettino for having abandoned the ship before all passengers were off and ordered him to return, shouting the now-infamous order "Go on board (expletive)!"

De Falco said he wanted to go to Giglio to "embrace the victims, and the relatives of the victims." □



A priest blesses a commemorative plaque bearing the names of the 32 people who died in the Costa Concordia shipwreck, after it was unveiled in the Tuscan island Isola del Giglio, Italy, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013.

(AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

near where the Concordia still lays on its side. And later, under a cold rain, they gathered on the jetty holding candles to observe a moment of silence

While many tears were shed Sunday, relatives also seemed to have found some comfort in coming to the tiny fishing island of Giglio, where residents

for my mother who suffered a lot for her son," said Madeleine Costilla Mendoza, whose brother Tomas Alberto Costilla Mendoza of Peru was a steward on the

Bomb hits convoy of Iraq's finance minister

SAMEER N. YACOB
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Attackers detonated a bomb Sunday next to a convoy carrying the Iraqi finance minister, a central figure in more than two weeks of protests by minority Sunnis against the Shiite-dominated Baghdad government, police said. The minister, Rafia al-Issawi, was not hurt in the bombing. The device exploded as the last car in his convoy

was passing by.

Al-Issawi is one of the senior Sunni officials in the government. Arrest of his bodyguards set off a wave of protests in Anbar province, a huge, mostly Sunni area, once a haven for al-Qaida militants that targeted Shiites and U.S. forces during the American-led operation in Iraq that started in 2003. The last U.S. combat soldiers left Iraq a year ago.

The minister was heading to Fallujah

to meet with tribal leaders. Fallujah is at the eastern edge of Anbar, closest to Baghdad.

The attack on al-Issawi could trigger another round of protests. Rare demonstrations by angry Sunnis on the main highway between Iraq and Syria caused disruptions over the past two weeks.

Sunnis charge that the central government is discriminating against them. □



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4 protest Vatican gay marriage stance

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Four women have gone topless in St. Peter's Square to protest the Vatican's opposition to gay marriage.

Police quickly took the women away Sunday, and the pope appeared not to have been disturbed as he delivered his traditional prayer from his studio window overlooking the piazza. On their bare backs, the women had painted slogans "In Gay We Trust," and "Shut Up." One of them, Inna Shevchenko, said: "Today we are here to protest against homophobia."

The small demonstration coincided with a march in Paris that is expected to draw hundreds of thousands of people to protest the French president's plan to legalize gay marriage and let gay couples adopt children. French Catholic bishops and other religious leaders have strongly opposed the proposal, and the Vatican has backed them. □



Italian police officers stop members of a group of four women who went topless to protest the Vatican's opposition to gay marriage, in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013. (AP Photo/Angelo Carconi)

Afghan civilians killed in blast after raid

© 2013 New York Times

KABUL, Afghanistan — An explosion in a mountain village in eastern Afghanistan on Sunday left at least seven civilians dead just after a joint U.S. and Afghan military raid killed four Taliban fighters there, Afghan officials said.

Shaheedullah Shaheed, a spokesman for the governor of Wardak province, said that seven civilians including one woman were killed, but villagers put the number of civilian deaths at 16.

A spokesman for the international forces said an investigation was under way and that the explosion occurred after the Taliban fighters were killed. It was

unclear what caused the explosion, but the villagers blamed the international forces.

In recent months, insurgents have taken a toll on the Afghan forces in the area. Thirty Afghan National Army soldiers have been killed in ambushes and explosions in the last 11 months and another 70 wounded, said Maj. Saifuddin Zaffari, the operational commander for the Afghan army's 3rd Battalion of the 4th Brigade, which has responsibility for the Tangi region.

In Sunday's raid, which occurred before dawn, a team of U.S. and Afghan special operations forces detained a Taliban leader

and then came under fire from Taliban gunmen who were hiding in a mosque. At least some of the Taliban were wearing suicide vests, which exploded during the fight, destroying the mosque, Afghan officials said.

"It was a joint ground operation in Hassan Khail village of Seyda Bad that killed four armed Taliban inside the mosque," Zaffari said.

"Some civilians were trying to collect the bodies or to get their weapons and other ammunition when suddenly a huge explosion took place and resulted in civilian casualties but we don't know the exact numbers," he said. □

India:

Woman gang raped in Punjab

**H. TIMMONS
HARI KUMAR**

© 2013 New York Times

NEW DELHI — Police said Sunday that a 29-year-old woman had been raped by a bus driver, a bus conductor and five other men in the north Indian state of Punjab, in an incident that recalls the recent attack in Delhi that has caused widespread outrage.

The woman boarded a bus on Friday bound for Gurdaspur, to visit her in-laws, the police chief of Gurdaspur, Raj Jit Singh, said in a telephone interview. When she got off the bus, the driver offered her a ride on his motorcycle, perhaps to her in-laws' village, the police said. Instead, he took her to a nearby village where he and six

other men, including the bus conductor, raped her repeatedly through the night. The next morning, the driver dropped her at her in-laws' home, where the woman told her family members of the incident, and then reported it to the police, Singh said.

Six men, including the bus driver and conductor, have been arrested, he said. All of the men are in their 20s. Gurmeh Singh, the deputy superintendent of police for the region, said it was unclear how or why the bus driver persuaded the woman to go with him on his motorcycle. She was in a state of distress during the bus ride, he said, and originally refused to get off the bus when it reached its final destination. □

Mexico:

Vigilante groups policing 2 towns

ACAPULCO, Mexico (AP)

— Several hundred civilians have taken up arms in two towns in a southwestern Mexico state and are arresting people suspected of crimes and imposing a curfew, leading authorities to promise to reinforce security forces in the area.

People wearing ski masks or bandanas and carrying small arms this week began manning checkpoints on roads into the municipalities of Ayutla de los Libres and Teconoapa in Guerrero state's Costa Chica area about 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of the Pacific resort of Acapulco. Leaders said they were acting against crime and insecurity. Guerrero Gov. Angel Aguirre Rivero responded Friday by announcing that security in the region would be bolstered by sending in Mexican soldiers and marines

and federal and state police officers. People in the area said about 800 residents were participating in the armed groups acting as unofficial police. The vigilantes ordered a 10 p.m. curfew for the two towns and are looking for suspected criminals. Schools have suspended classes. In Ayutla, Romualdo Remigio Cantu, one of the coordinators for the civic group Union of Peoples and Social Organizations of Guerrero, said that more than 30 people had been arrested. The detainees are accused of drug trafficking, extortion and kidnapping, he said. A man in a ski mask at one roadblock told reporters that townspeople had to act against criminals. "They kill, extort, rape. You do not know if they are drug dealers, thugs, who want to grab everything," he said. □



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Somber anniversary held to mark Haiti earthquake

TRENTON DANIEL

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— President Michel Martelly urged Haitians to recall the tens of thousands of people who lost their lives in a devastating earthquake three years ago, marking the disaster's anniversary Saturday with a simple ceremony.

Former U.S. president Bill Clinton joined Martelly later in the day for a similarly quiet wreath-laying commemoration.

"Haitian people, hand in hand, we remember what has gone," Martelly said in the morning as a gigantic Haitian flag flew at half-staff before him on the front lawn of the former National Palace, a pile of tangled steel reinforcement bars nearby. "Hand in hand, we're remembering, we're remembering Jan. 12."

Martelly thanked other countries and international organizations for their help since the Jan. 12, 2010, disaster.

Clad in black, several dozen senior government officials gathered where the opulent white palace stood before it collapsed in the temblor and was later demolished. Foreign diplomats and Czech supermodel Petra Nemcova, earlier named by Martelly as one of Haiti's goodwill ambassadors, were also there.

In the speech, Martelly announced a government contest seeking designs for a monument to honor those who died in the quake. He also said the government had just released a new construction code aimed at ensuring new buildings are seismically resistant in hopes of preventing the same kind of catastrophic damage in

any future earthquake.

In the late morning, Clinton, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti, joined Martelly and Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe in placing a wreath at a mass burial site north of the capital of Port-au-

Prince.

"I think that you will see, particularly in the economic sphere, a lot more in the coming year, where Haiti is projected to have the highest growth rate in the Caribbean," he said. "Well,

those people out of those tents."

Clinton, Martelly and Lamothe met privately in the afternoon.

Haiti's previous presidential administration said 316,000 people were killed but no

been carted away but more than 350,000 people still live in grim displacement camps.

Many people had hoped the reconstruction effort would have made more headway by now, but progress has been stymied by political paralysis, the scale of devastation and a trickle of aid.

Jan. 12 was observed as a national holiday the last two years to remember the quake. This year, the government said the day would no longer be a holiday but called for the Haitian flag to be flown at half-staff and for nightclubs and "similar establishments" to close.

The anniversary this year has been used by Haiti observers to criticize the reconstruction process and by foreign aid groups to promote their work and raise money. The European Union announced Saturday it was giving Haiti 30.5 million euros for displaced people still living in camps, as well as victims of a subsequent cholera epidemic and those affected by Hurricane Sandy late last year.



Haiti's President Michel Martelly, left, UN special envoy to Haiti and former President Bill Clinton, center, and Haiti's first lady Sophia Martelly, right center, attend a memorial service for victims of the 2010 earthquake, at Titanyen, a mass burial site north of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013.

(AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Prince. None of the three spoke at the event.

Clinton expressed hope about Haiti's future in brief comments to reporters af-

ter the ceremony. "we hope to speed up some of the infrastructure. We have to repair the agriculture and ... build a lot more houses. We've got to get

one really knows how many died. The disaster displaced more than a million others. Most of the rubble created by the quake has since

Police:

Failing brakes kill 4 Americans in Haiti

TRENTON DANIEL

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— Failing brakes were the cause of a traffic accident in Haiti that killed four Michigan residents on a medical mission, Haitian police said this weekend.

Garry Victor of Haiti's national police department said the Toyota Landcruiser carrying the four Americans and their Haitian driver crashed through a barrier on a roadway in the mountains south of Port-au-Prince, then slid down a steep hill. The vehicle was in a five-vehicle convoy traveling to a hamlet where the missionaries were to spend a week providing

medical attention to villagers.

Three of the Americans died on the spot and the fourth died in a hospital in the coastal town of Jacmel, Victor said. The Haitian driver was also taken to the hospital for medical treatment. Roman Catholic officials in Michigan identified the four Michigan residents as Matt Kutsche, Mary LaPonsie and Jim and Rita Cwengros.

A West Michigan clergyman, the Rev. John Vallier, said LaPonsie and Jim and Rita Cwengros had previously served on at least 15 multiple missions to the village of Seguin in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

The long-time members of the Holy

Spirit Roman Catholic Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., were "dynamic, active people ... living their faith as best they could," said Vallier, the church's pastor.

Vallier said his church had a relationship with a parish in Seguin. "We help them with their water filtration system and dental work.

And they have representatives come here and share with us some of the things they do in the school and the church," he said.

Other missionaries in the group were planning to return from the trip early in the wake of the accident, the Michigan pastor said. □

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8-year-old British girl fatally shot in Jamaica

DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)

— A British schoolgirl visiting relatives in a rural village in northern Jamaica was fatally shot when a lone gunman opened fire on a group of family members as they gathered at a roadside shop, officials said Sunday.

Imani Green, 8, of Balham in south London, was standing inside a clapboard grocery store and bar with Jamaican relatives Friday evening when a gunman wearing a

hoodie shot the child in the head and shoulder before also shooting and wounding three adult members of her family.

Police said the shooting was believed to be some sort of retaliatory attack, but investigators were still working in the normally quiet Red Dirt district of Duncans in Trelawny parish. The roadside business where the shooting occurred is apparently owned by a female relative of the slain girl. There have been no arrests.

The girl died from her in-

juries while undergoing treatment at a hospital in nearby Falmouth, a historic coastal town that is home to the tourism-dependent Caribbean island's newest cruise ship port. The three adults were listed in stable condition.

The British Foreign & Commonwealth Office said it was providing consular assistance to the family and working with authorities in Jamaica.

James Mortimer, a press officer with the British agency, said Imani's relatives were "very distressed" and

"appealing for privacy." Imani, her mother and sister had planned on visiting relatives in Jamaica until the end of the month.

Janella Parmer, the slain child's sister, told the BBC that she found her young sibling in a pool of blood after hearing gunshots outside.

"I picked her up off the ground and realized she was still breathing. I flagged down a car and they drove us to hospital. The rest is history," the BBC quoted Parmer as saying. Jamaican Justice Min-

ister Peter Bunting said the "senseless killing of a young, innocent child must outrage all well-thinking Jamaicans."

The island's government said the Falmouth police are conducting an "extensive investigation into the matter and will expend every effort to ensure that the perpetrator is apprehended and brought to justice."

There has been a heavy police presence in Duncans since the shooting. Neighbors said they were shocked by the slaying of the child in a generally quiet district where many people farm for a living or commute to jobs in Falmouth or Montego Bay. Pastors decried the violence during weekend church services.

"It is so, so sad. And for this to happen in Duncans is just hard to believe. This is maybe the second shooting here that I can remember," said resident Elaine R. Duncan.

Sadiq Khan, a British lawmaker who represents the schoolgirl's south London area in the British Parliament, tweeted Sunday that he was "devastated" to learn of the killing.

There were 1,087 homicides last year on the island of some 2.8 million people. It was the lowest number of killings in nine years in Jamaica, but authorities acknowledge that the island's rate of violent crime is still unacceptably high.

Most of Jamaica's violence takes place in rough slums, with tourist resorts largely crime-free. □

Costa Rica:

Mothers hold breastfeed protest at mall

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP)

— At least 50 mothers sat down in a mall's fast food area and breastfed infants for nearly two hours this weekend, protesting over the shopping center forcing a woman to stop nursing her daughter a week earlier.

The action by Lincoln Square set off a furor on Costa Rican social media and even prompted a statement from the president — a reaction that seemed to shock the mall's management, which quickly apologized for the incident and announced that breastfeeding would be allowed anywhere in the shopping center.

Despite the retreat, some women decided to go ahead with the "mama-ton" protest to show soli-

darity with Patricia Barrantes, who left the mall the previous weekend rather

el and move to a special lactation room.

One of the mothers at the



Costa Rican women breast feed their babies during a pro-breastfeeding demonstration at the Plaza Lincoln shopping center in San Jose, Costa Rica, Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013. At least 50 mothers gathered in the mall's fast food area and breastfed infants for nearly two hours Saturday, protesting over the shopping center forcing a woman to stop nursing her daughter a week earlier.

(AP Photo/Enrique Martinez)

than comply with a security guard's order to stop nursing her daughter Mari-

rally traveled a hundred miles from Turrialba to the mall in Costa Rica's capi-

tal, San Jose.

"It gave me a lot of anger ... like you're doing something dirty, as if it's bad to remove a breast to feed your daughter," she said while holding her 11-month-old daughter Camila.

Similar anger was widespread after reports of what happened to Barrantes. Thousands of angry comments were posted on Twitter and Facebook, mainly by women in Costa Rica and other countries in the region.

Women's and children's groups said the incident set a terrible example in a region where they are trying to encourage more breastfeeding instead of the widespread use of baby formula in order to improve infant health. □

The Balloon Parade in San Nicolas lifts spirits!



SAN NICOLAS - Although the Balloon Parade is primarily for children, adults enjoy the pageantry just the same. Children enjoy the chance to participate as individuals with their parents or as full fledge Carnival groups with a theme. The public loves the child's play and unlike the last few years the weather cooperated and there was nothing but sunshine to brighten the parade! ☐

Arthur and Rosanna Franciosa enchanted with Aruba

ORANJESTAD – The New York couple Arthur and Rosanna Franciosa from Westchester, New York, are totally impressed with the beauty and the people of Aruba. They've been here since Wednesday and are leaving today, but they very much wish they could

stay longer! Retreating for what have been the holidays, they are in the company of 14 people who are regular guests of the island. This is their first vacation to the island. Mr. Arthur told us that he loves the beauty of the island, the weather and in particular the people.

Also he commented about the quality of the restaurants that are amazing. We hope for a happy return of Mr. and Mrs. Franciosa to our lovely island so they can enjoy more of our people, our food and our activities. □



Beauty On The Beach

Megan Janer

She is from Michigan. Her first time in Aruba, she is on her honeymoon, staying at Marriott Ocean Club. She loves the Aruban Beach and local food.

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Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa included in the Travel + Leisure 2013 World's Best Awards survey!!



tor of Sales & Marketing Arianne Valentino, on island this week for a meeting with the resort's new General Manager Mark Lyttleton Frances. Several of the Radisson hotels including the Aruba flagship property, and the chain's Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel in Chicago including the Radisson Blu, Resort, Marina & Spa in St. Martin and other Blu hotels in other parts of the world have also been included in the poll for Travel + Leisure's World's Best Awards 2013. The following is a link to the survey <http://tlworldsbest.roiresearch.com/>, open through April 1, 2013. The reader-selected winners will be announced in the August 2013 issue of the magazine. □

PALM BEACH – Fans and friends of the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa listed the resort as a contender on the Travel + Leisure 2013 World's Best Awards survey. We are delighted that our resort was chosen to participate in the Travel + Leisure 2013 World's Best Awards survey, and we are encouraging our guests to go on line and vote. Those who will, are entered in a mega giveaway for a chance to win a \$10,000 dream trip to the destination of their choice, says Direc-



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Caribbean Palm Village Makes a Donation

NOORD -- The elderly home at Palisiaweg in San Nicolaas has just received a generous donation on behalf of the staff and the members' cooperative of Caribbean Palm Village Resort.

The donation was presented on the occasion of the resort's 25th anniversary.

The money was raised by staff members, each donating Awg 10 from their Christmas basket, while the members' cooperative donated the rest. The elderly home residents were very grateful to receive a portable public address system which they may use for their activities, including a microphone stand. The cash donation of Awg 1,000 will be used to make a number of wooden benches, and for the purchase of a used



computer and key board. Pictured here, the donation received by some home resident and nurses Yvonne and Monique. The Caribbean Palm Village Resort is friendly low rise resort in the Noord neighborhood, adjacent to

Palm Beach, with 170 nicely decorated one and two bedroom suites set amidst lush tropical gardens. The resort has been offering genuine Aruban hospitality to time share members for more than one-quarter of a century! □

United Airlines Unveils New Lounge Concept

CHICAGO - United Airlines has unveiled its new United Club lounge in Terminal 2 at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, the first to feature a new design prototype that the airline will use when building and renovating lounges worldwide.

The 13,300 square foot United Club features a completely redesigned interior that reflects elements of flight and travel. United has outfitted the club with an expansive bar and lounge area, dynamic lighting, redesigned furniture and additional workstations and power outlets. The new and improved furnishings enable customers to relax or work with greater ease and comfort.

"The new United Club offers customers an im-

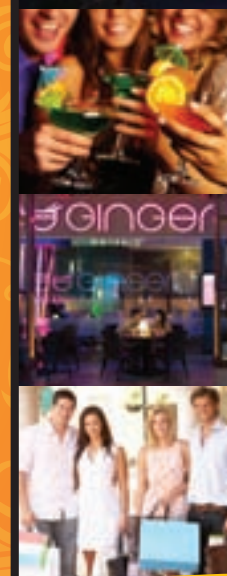
proved airport lounge experience," said Jim Compton, vice chairman and chief revenue officer at United. "We are investing in our products, on the ground and in the air, to enable our customers to be more comfortable and productive."

"We are committed to improving the facilities our customers use every day," said Kate Gebo, vice president of corporate real estate at United. "In addition to redesigning our lounges, we are installing new jet bridges in Chicago, rebuilding the south concourse in Terminal B in Houston and building new maintenance hangars at Washington Dulles and Newark to improve efficiency and help us better serve our customers." □

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The Phoenix Coyotes' Lauri Korpikoski, of Finland, right, passes Marin Hanzal, of the Czech Republic, as he heads for the ice for the Coyotes' first voluntary skate Sunday, Jan. 13, 2012 in Glendale, Ariz., since the NHL and the players' Union reached a contract agreement Saturday. The NHL will start its 119 day lockout-shortened season Jan. 19th.

Associated Press

NHL returns with most teams on ice for 1st skate

LARRY LAGE
AP Hockey Writer
PLYMOUTH, Michigan (AP)

— On a sheet of ice a few miles from sandy beaches, the Los Angeles Kings finally got to begin their quest to hoist the Stanley Cup again. Several hundred fans packed wooden bleachers in El Segundo, California, on Sunday, eager to watch the Kings practice four months after the NHL lockout started and seven months after their favorite team was crowned champion for the first time. A skate that would usually draw a few dozen fans in the past turned into a place to be because hockey is back. "You get a little celebration, but pretty soon you start wanting to get ready for the season," Kings goaltender Jonathan Quick said.

Continued on Page 19



TEXAS BBQ

Patriots beat Texans, back in AFC title game

New England Patriots Shane Vereen (L) and Wes Welker (R) celebrate in the end zone after Vereen scored a touchdown on a pass from quarterback Tom Brady (not pictured) during the fourth quarter of their NFL AFC Divisional playoff football game against the Houston Texans in Foxborough, Massachusetts January 13, 2013.

Associated Press
Page 20



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Sharapova starts Australian Open with 6-0, 6-0 win

JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Maria Sharapova finished her first match of the year in 55 minutes Monday, cruising to a 6-0, 6-0 win over Olga Puchkova to start proceedings on center court at the Australian Open without showing any signs of trouble with her sore right collarbone.

The No. 2-ranked Sharapova, who lost the final to Victoria Azarenka here last year before going on to win the French Open, faced only two break points in the match and she saved both of those in the first game. Then she went on a 12-game roll that earned her a second "double bagel" inside a year.

Sharapova started her run to the French Open title with a 6-0, 6-0 win over Alexandra Caduntu at Roland Garros last year.

But she said the scoreline wasn't really relevant.

"If you win 7-6 in the third, you've still won the match," she said. "I don't really think time matters and the scorelines."

Sharapova withdrew from the Brisbane International earlier this month with an injured right collarbone, saying she wanted to concentrate on being fit for the season's first major. She skipped the tournament last year, as well, before going on to reach the Australian Open final.

Against Puchkova, she said, "I didn't want to focus on the fact I hadn't played a lot of matches."

Sharapova has a potential third-round match against Venus Williams, who needed just an hour for her opening 6-1, 6-0 win over Galina Voskoboeva of Kazakhstan.

Williams played with power

and determination and took command of the match early with a steady stream of winners and powerful serves.

She skipped last year's Australian Open due to illness and was warmly welcomed with applause as she entered the court. Venus Williams had the biggest jump of any of the top players in 2012, moving from outside the top 100 to finish the year at No. 24.

The announcer told the crowd as Williams, who has won seven major titles, was warming up on court: "She's back and fiery."

Her younger sister, Serena, was sitting in the crowd with coach Patrick Mouratoglou. Serena is the hot favorite to win the Australian Open, heading into the tournament with 35 wins from her last 36 matches including titles at Wimbledon, the Olympics



Russia's Maria Sharapova serves to compatriot Olga Puchkova during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Jan. 14, 2013.

Associated Press



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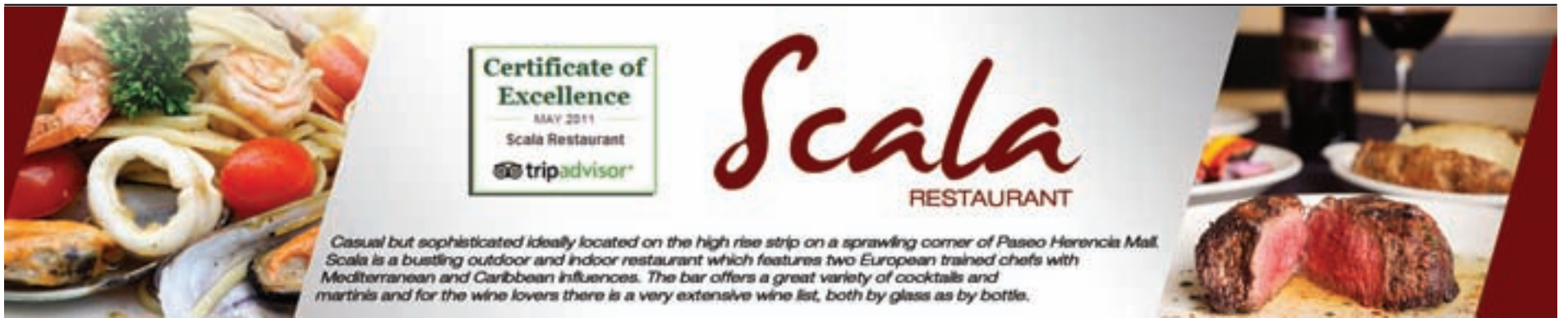
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and the U.S. Open. No. 3-ranked Serena Williams is in the top half of the draw with defending champion Victoria Azarenka, and the pair won't start until Tuesday.

China's Li Na is already into the second round after beating Sesil Karatantcheva 6-1, 6-3. Sixth-seeded Li, who reached the Australian

Open final and won the French Open in 2011, broke her Kazakh opponent four times and hit 21 winners to just six for Karatantcheva. Novak Djokovic starts his bid to be the first man in the Open era to win three consecutive Australian titles later Monday with a first-round match against Paul-Henri Mathieu of France.



NHL LOCKOUT

Continued from Page 17

"We've been looking forward to this for a long time now."

The NHL, and its fans that haven't been soured by a third work stoppage in less than two decades, can finally shift their focus to the ice after languishing through labor negotiations that ended on the 113th day of the lockout last Sunday.

Almost a full week after agreeing to a tentative deal, both sides signed a memorandum of understanding late Saturday to seal labor peace for at least eight years. The signatures allowed teams to open training camp Sunday and most did, including the Detroit Red Wings at a roughly half-full suburban Detroit rink that has 3,504 seats.

"It almost felt like Christmas, seeing everyone again and seeing everyone so excited to get going again," Detroit defenseman Niklas Kronwall said. "It was a great feeling to see all the fans out there also."

More than 2,000 Philadelphia Flyers fans crammed into the team's training facility in New Jersey and warmly welcomed the team back.

"This warm reception makes us feel a little bit better about what happened to the fans and being out so long," Flyers forward Scott Hartnell said.

The Florida Panthers, Nashville Predators and Phoenix Coyotes planned to have their first practices on Monday.

There's not much time to get ready for a 48-game sprint of a season — all that could be salvaged from an 82-game slate — that will start without anyone playing a preseason game and

won't get much rest.

"Normally in a five-week training camp you get an opportunity to give everybody over eight exhibition games the power play, the penalty kill, everything to really show what they have," Detroit coach Mike Babcock said. "That's not going to happen."

Teams will play an average of 3.44 games per week, slightly more than the 48-game, lockout-shortened 1994-95 season, after playing 3.15 a week on average last season, according to STATS LLC.

Los Angeles gets to open at home against the Chicago Blackhawks after unveiling the franchise's first Stanley Cup banner on Saturday in one of 13 games on opening day. The Kings then play 11 of their next 14 games on the road.

"It's going to be a grind," Kings defenseman Drew Doughty said. "It's going to be playoff hockey every time we're out there, but that's what we enjoy. Everybody in the league is going to be in the same boat, so we've got to avoid going on any long losing streak, but we're happy to get a chance to come back."

The postseason will start April 30 and end no later than June 28.

The New York Rangers were top-seeded team in the Eastern Conference playoffs last season and fell a round short of the finals last year. They're hoping for more this year after acquiring five-time All-Star Rick Nash in a trade with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

The Minnesota Wild made the largest splash in free agency, shooting to get back to the playoffs for the first time since 2008. They surprised many across the league when they added highly touted free agents

Zach Parise and Ryan Suter with 13-year, \$98 million contracts.

Minnesota won't have much time to break in their new stars.

"Getting off to a good start's pretty important," Parise said. "You don't have the dog days of the season. It's basically half a season and go. It's a sprint to the playoffs. So you want to make sure the games at the beginning of the season are just as, if not more, important than the ones at the end."



Pittsburgh Penguins coach Dan Bylsma, lower right, sets up a drill as Penguins' Tanner Glass (10), Matt Cooke (24), Matt Niskanen (2) and Pascal Dupuis (9) listen during NHL hockey practice in Canonsburg, Pa., Sunday Jan. 13, 2013. It was the first official practice of the 2013 NHL season for the Penguins.

Associated Press

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Patriots beat Texans 41-28, Ravens up next

By **BARRY WILNER**

AP Pro Football Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP)

-- Tom Brady idolized Joe Montana as a kid in the Bay Area. Now, he's surpassed his hero for post-season wins.

Brady got his 17th, the most for any quarterback, in New England's 41-28 AFC divisional victory over Houston on Sunday. If Brady can lead the Patriots past Baltimore in next weekend's conference title game, then win the Super Bowl, he'll equal the 49ers' Hall of Famer for NFL championships.

Brady has guided the Patriots to five Super Bowls, winning the first three; Montana was 4 for 4 in the big game, playing for Brady's



like he might reach that total against Houston's befuddled defense. He caught six in the first half for 120 yards, including a 47-yarder, and wound up with eight for 131.

And the AFC East champion Patriots got more than anyone could have predicted from third-string running back Vereen, who scored their first two TDs on a 1-yard run and an 8-yard pass. He capped his biggest pro performance with an over-the-shoulder 33-yard catch early in the fourth period.

It was Brady's 41st postseason TD pass, behind only Brett Favre (44) and, you guessed it, Montana (45).

"I hope I am around for a few more years," the 35-year-old Brady said. "I love playing, I love competing ..."

The boost from Vereen offset the loss of tight end Rob Gronkowski (arm) and RB Danny Woodhead (thumb) in the first quarter. "Shane had a great game, just a huge growing up moment for him, very special," Brady said.

"There were a lot of guys who made a lot of plays." New England's defense helped put away the Texans. Rob Ninkovich's leaping third-quarter interception stopped a drive, and six plays later, Brady hit Brandon Lloyd for a 6-yard score.

Although the Texans got two fourth-quarter TDs on passes by Matt Schaub, their season ended with four defeats in their last six games. The Texans couldn't measure up.

Unlike their 42-14 loss here a month ago, the Texans didn't fold early. J.J. Watt, their dominating defensive end, bothered Brady, and when they fell behind 17-3, they had the fortitude to climb back.

Arian Foster did all the work after Danieal Manning's second big kickoff return, this one a 35-yarder that had 15 yards tacked on when kicker Stephen Gostkowski brought down Manning with a horse-collar tackle. □

New England Patriots wide receiver Wes Welker (83) pulls in a 47-yard pass from Tom Brady as Houston Texans cornerback Kareem Jackson chases him during the first half of an AFC divisional playoff NFL football game in Foxborough, Mass., Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013.
Associated Press

hometown team. "I grew up a 49ers fan," Brady said. "Joe Montana and Steve Young ... those guys are in another class." Next up is Baltimore, which stunned top-seeded Denver in double overtime Saturday, and lost 23-20 at Gillette Stadium last January in the last step before the Super Bowl. But the Ravens beat the Patriots in Week 3 this season at Baltimore. "I think the two best teams are in the final," Brady said. "Baltimore certainly deserves to be here and so do we."

Seldom-used Shane Vereen scored three times, twice on pinpoint throws from Brady, as New England (13-4) beat Houston (13-5) for the second time in a month.

Brady was missing some key helpers, but got the usual outstanding performance from Wes Welker, his favorite target the last six years. The AFC's top receiver with 118 catches this season, Welker looked

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NFL Roundup

Bryant's late FG lifts Falcons over Seattle

PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Matt Bryant kicked a 49-yard field goal with 8 seconds left as the Atlanta Falcons bounced back after blowing a 20-point lead in the fourth quarter, defeating Russell Wilson and the gummy Seattle Seahawks 30-28 in an NFC divisional playoff game Sunday.

The Falcons (14-3) appeared ready to allow the biggest fourth-quarter comeback in NFL playoff history when Marshawn Lynch scored on a 2-yard run with 31 seconds left. But Matt Ryan completed two long passes after the kickoff, setting up Bryant's winning kick and sending the Falcons to the NFC championship game for only the third time in franchise history.

They will host the San Francisco 49ers next Sunday.

Wilson passed for two touchdowns and ran for another, but it wasn't enough for the Seahawks (12-6).

The rookie finished with 385 yards passing and did all he could to lead the Seahawks back from a 27-7 deficit entering the fourth quarter. When Lynch powered over in the final minute, a play set up by Wilson's brilliant scramble, Seattle celebrated like it would be moving on.

Not so fast.

Ryan, who had struggled in his first three playoff appearances, had just enough time to rally the Falcons.

He hooked up with Harry Douglas on a 29-yard pass in front of the Falcons bench, and coach Mike Smith quickly signaled a

timeout. Then, Ryan went down the middle to his favorite target, tight end Tony Gonzalez, a Hall of Famer-to-be playing what could've been his final game.

Gonzalez hauled in the 19-yard throw, and Smith called his final timeout with 13 seconds remaining. Instead of risking another play and having the clock run out, he sent Bryant in for the field goal try.

The Seahawks called time just before the ball was snapped, and Bryant's kick sailed right of the upright. That turned out to be nothing more than practice. The next one was right down the middle, giving the Falcons a stunning victory.

Wilson's last throw, a desperation heave into the end zone, was intercepted by Falcons receiver Julio Jones. □



Atlanta Falcons kicker Matt Bryant (3) reacts to his game-winning field goal against the Seattle Seahawks during the second half of an NFC divisional playoff NFL football game Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013, in Atlanta. The Falcons won 30-28.

Associated Press

Nets rally from 12 down in 3rd, beat Pacers 97-86

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) - Deron Williams had 22 points and nine assists, Joe Johnson scored 20 points and the Brooklyn Nets rallied from 12 points down in the third quarter to beat the Indiana Pacers 97-86 Sunday night.

Brook Lopez scored 10 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and also finished with nine rebounds to help the Nets win their season-high sixth straight game.

David West had 27 points to lead the Pacers. Paul George added 15 points and 12 rebounds, and Gerald Green also scored 15 points.

Green made two free



Indiana Pacers' Paul George, right, tries to drive past Brooklyn Nets' Deron Williams during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013, in New York. The Nets beat the Pacers 97-86.

Associated Press

throws against his former team to give Indiana a 67-55 lead - its largest of the

game - with 5 1/2 minutes remaining in the third quarter. □


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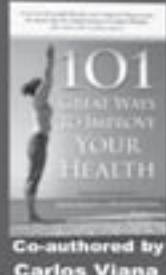
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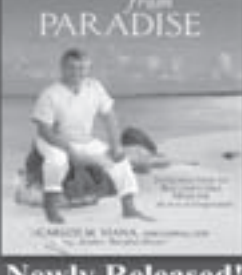
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Flu more widespread in US; eases in some regions

MIKE STOBBE

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Flu is now widespread in all but three states as the nation grapples with an earlier-than-normal season. But there was one bit of good news Friday: The number of hard-hit areas declined.

The flu season in the U.S. got under way a month early, in December, driven by a strain that tends to make people sicker. That led to worries that it might be a bad season, following one of the mildest flu seasons in recent memory.

The latest numbers do show that the flu surpassed an "epidemic" threshold last week. That is based on deaths from pneumonia and influenza in 122 U.S. cities. However, it's not unusual — the epidemic level varies at different times of the year, and it was breached earlier this flu season, in October and November.

And there's a hint that the flu season may already have peaked in some spots, like in the South. Still,

officials there and elsewhere are bracing for more sickness.

In Ohio, administrators at Miami University are anxious that a bug that hit employees will spread to students when they return

17,000-student school.

Despite the early start, health officials say it's not too late to get a flu shot. The vaccine is considered a good — though not perfect — protection against getting really sick from the



Sonia Despiar, LPN, right, a nurse with Gouverneur Healthcare Services, injects Imelda Silva with flu vaccine, during a doctor's visit in New York. At least 10 elderly people and two children in New York have died from the flu and hospitalizations are climbing as the illness hits every county in the state.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

to the Oxford campus next week.

"Everybody's been sick. It's miserable," said Ritter Hoy, a spokeswoman for the

flu.

Flu was widespread in 47 states last week, up from 41 the week before, the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention said on Friday. The only states without widespread flu were California, Mississippi and Hawaii.

The number of hard-hit states fell to 24 from 29, where larger numbers of people were treated for flu-like illness. Now off that list: Florida, Arkansas and South Carolina in the South, the first region hit this flu season. Recent flu reports included holiday weeks when some doctor's offices were closed, so it will probably take a couple more weeks to get a better picture, CDC officials said Friday. Experts say so far say the season looks moderate.

"Only time will tell how moderate or severe this flu season will be," CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden said Friday in a teleconference with reporters.

The government doesn't keep a running tally of adult deaths from the flu, but estimates that it kills about 24,000 people in an average year. Nationally, 20 children have died from

the flu this season.

Flu vaccinations are recommended for everyone 6 months or older. Since the swine flu epidemic in 2009, vaccination rates have increased in the U.S., but more than half of Americans haven't gotten this year's vaccine.

Nearly 130 million doses of flu vaccine were distributed this year, and at least 112 million have been used. Vaccine is still available, but supplies may have run low in some locations, officials said.

To find a shot, "you may have to call a couple places," said Dr. Patricia Quinlisk, who tracks the flu in Iowa.

In midtown Manhattan, Hyrmete Sciuto got a flu shot Friday at a drugstore. She skipped it in recent years, but news reports about the flu this week worried her.

During her commute from Edgewater, N.J., by ferry and bus, "I have people coughing in my face," she said. "I didn't want to risk it this year." □

More emergency room visits linked to energy drinks

BARRY MEIER

© 2013 New York Times

A rising number of patients, many of them young people, are being treated in emergency rooms for complications related to highly caffeinated energy drinks like Red Bull, Monster Energy and 5-Hour Energy, new federal data shows.

The number of annual hospital visits involving the drinks doubled from 2007 to 2011, the latest year for which data are available, according to a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

In 2011, there were 20,783 reported emergency room visits in which an energy

drink was cited as the primary cause of or a contributing factor to a health problem, compared with 10,068 in 2007.

Such problems, which are typically linked to excessive caffeine consumption, can include anxiety, headaches, irregular heartbeats and heart attacks.

The energy drink industry, which had estimated sales last year of more than \$10 billion, has come under increasing scrutiny after recent disclosures that the Food and Drug Administration has received numerous reports of deaths and injuries in which the drinks were mentioned. A product's mention in an FDA

report does not mean it played a role in a death or an injury, and energy drink producers insist that their



The number of annual hospital visits related to energy drinks doubled from 2007 to 2011, with patients from 18 to 25 accounting for the largest group by age, a federal report found.

(William P. O'Donnell/The New York Times)

beverages are safe.

The new report, released Thursday, reflects updated statistics gathered through the Drug Abuse Warning Network, a government system to which hospitals report drug-related emergency room visits.

Hospital visits related to energy drinks fell slightly from 2008 to 2009, the year at which a previous report ended.

But the new data show that such visits rose again in 2010 and reached a record in 2011.


"Consumption of energy drinks is a rising public health problem because medical and behavioral problems can result from


excessive caffeine intake," the report said.


"A growing body of scientific evidence documents harmful health effects of energy drinks, particularly for children, adolescents and young adults."

People from 18 to 25 accounted for the largest group of patients by age, the data show. Overall, male patients accounted for about two-thirds of those treated.

"Health professionals can discourage use of energy drinks by explaining that perceived health benefits are largely due to marketing techniques rather than scientific evidence," the report said. □







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Google's ultrafast Internet draws startups to KC

MARIA SUDEKUM
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kansas (AP)

— Inside a small bungalow on the street separating Kansas City, Kansas, from its sister city in Missouri, a small group of entrepreneurs are working on their ideas for the next high-tech startup, tapping Google Inc.'s new superfast Internet connection that has turned the neighborhood into an unlikely settlement dubbed the "Silicon Prairie."

The home on State Line Road is one of several startup-friendly locations that have sprouted up in Kansas City in recent months. The catalyst is Google Fiber, the search-engine giant's fiber-optic network being tested in the Kansas City area that advertises speeds of up to a gigabyte per second — a rate that massively exceeds the average Internet speeds at homes hooked up with cable modems.

The advantage here for startups is simple: A fast Internet pipe makes it easier to handle large files and eliminates buffering problems that plague online video, live conferencing or other network-intensive tasks. Though the Kansas City location presents challenges for startups, including the ability to raise money outside the traditional Silicon Valley venture capital scene, entrepreneurs like Synthia Payne believe it's the place to be right now for up-and-coming tech companies.

Payne is one of those entrepreneurs hoping to launch her startup dream — an Internet subscription service for musicians who want to collaborate online — on the cheap. She shares the

State Line Road house, known as the "Home for Hackers," with other startups under a deal that allows them to live rent-free while they develop their business plans.

Google's network was attractive, Payne said, because her business plan "is dependent upon really good, really fast Internet."

"Without this on-ramp here I probably would have found it very difficult to come here," said Payne, who in December moved from Denver to develop CyberJammer.

Residents here were thrilled when Google announced last year that Kansas City, Kansas, and neighboring Kansas City, Missouri, would be its test bed for Google Fiber. The Mountain View, California-based company spent months and unknown sums installing optical fiber around the area. Google provides the full gigabit service for \$70 a month and its own cable-TV like service for another \$50. A slower Internet connection is free on a monthly basis after a \$300 installation fee.

The first homes were installed with fiber optics in the fall, with more "fiberhoods" planned in stages over the next several months. Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, remain Google's only fiber market, though the company has said it plans additional roll-outs. Many in the tech industry believe Google's move could ultimately force broadband providers to accelerate their networks to compete. Making Internet access faster would give the company more opportunities to attract traffic and

sell more advertising — the main way Google makes money.

The "Home for Hackers" and its unique business pitch is the brainchild of local web developer Ben Barreth, whose property was among the first wave of houses to be fiber-wired and is a block away from the Google Fiber offices. "Hackers" who pass Barreth's application process and show a real intention to work on a viable project can live there rent-free for three months. Since starting the home in October after cashing in his retirement account and putting a down payment on the \$48,000 home, Barreth has gotten applications from nearly 60 people seeking a spot in the home.

"The whole startup thing in Kansas City is like this huge growing beast," he said. "It's got this crazy momentum." The house has been full since mid-December with Payne and two others. One of the rooms also is reserved for fiber tourists who want a place for a day or two where they can download anything faster than they could elsewhere.

"The hope is that these startups will move their operations to Kansas City and this will really bless Kansas City, bring jobs and taxes and we'll build a really cool tech scene," Barreth said. A few homes away from the "Home for Hackers" is the headquarters of the Kansas City Startup Village, which was started by local entrepreneur Matthew Marcus and where Mike Farmer, founder of mobile search app Leap2.com, has his offices. Farmer said Google Fiber brought attention to Kansas City's



Matthew Marcus works at his desk in the basement of Kansas City Startup Village in Kansas City, Kan., Friday, Jan. 11, 2013. Marcus started the Village which houses several startup companies and takes advantage of the high speed internet.
Associated Press

startup culture, "because it sort of ignites the imagination about what you can do with that sort of bandwidth capability."

"Most every week I meet one or two or three people that are looking to come in from out of town," he said.

Despite the growth, it remains a challenge for startups to raise money from Kansas City, Farmer said. Silicon Valley venture capital groups in particular want startup entrepreneurs to be nearby in California, he said. □

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Wall Street Week Ahead:

Will Europe's markets weather the economic rebound?

MATTHEW CRAFT
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The big worry a year ago was that Greece would collapse under its debts, upend Europe's markets and set off a global financial crisis. But the world's most dangerous bond market turned out to be one of the world's best bets last year: Greece's government bonds soared 97 percent as the debt crisis eased. Across Europe, many of the region's stock markets outpaced those in the U.S.

"It has been a great investment opportunity, because a year ago at this time Europe was a big

reached a new high of 11.8 percent. Either the pain will pass and markets will continue surging ahead, investors say, or it's going to be a painful slog for many more years to come.

"It looks like the Greek meltdown scenario is off the table," Pazzanese says. "I'm just not sure Europe is back from the dead yet." Greece and the European debt crisis no longer topped Wall Street's list of worries by the end of the summer. Traders turned their attention to the danger that a package of budget cuts could push the U.S. into a slump in 2013. The turning point

if their Greek bonds would be paid back in euros or in newly printed Greek drachmas. Since then, Government borrowing costs in Greece, Italy and other struggling countries have dropped from dangerously high levels. European finance ministers have given Greece another two-year financial lifeline, and made strides toward shoring up the continent's banking system. In December, the rating agency Standard & Poor's gave Greece a better credit rating.

All these signs of progress propelled stock markets up. The Athens market surged 32 percent for the

son European companies sell for a discount: The economic crisis is far from over. Europe's financial markets may look stable but the region's overall economy is shrinking. It's likely to keep shrinking, Kelly says, as long as European officials demand struggling countries cut spending on government services in exchange for aid. "Austerity to fix a debt crisis doesn't work," Kelly says. "It only makes things worse. There's no evidence Europe's leaders really understand that." So why do so many of Wall Street's investment strategists believe that European markets will keep climbing? Bank of America predicts Europe's economy will recover later this year and push stock markets up more than 10 percent. Morgan Stanley's London-based investment team says European stocks could rise as much as 13 percent and now favor Europe over the U.S.

One reason is that companies can thrive even when people at home curb their spending. Adidas and Bayer, for instance, lean more on customers in China and other countries with faster-growing economies than on customers in Bonn and Berlin. So analysts expect that as China picks up speed and the U.S. economy recovers, their sales will increase even if Europe remains stuck in a recession. "China and other emerging markets are doing better," says Federated's Pazzanese. "That's great news to German and Italian exporters." Another reason is that financial markets often heal before the underlying economy, says Martin Jansen, lead manager for international equities at ING Investment Management. Investors are supposed to be forward looking, if a little trigger happy. They ditch assets if the future suddenly looks bleak and buy them back again on signs, or hope, that things will eventually get better. "Stability is one thing," Jansen says. "Getting back to normal is another." □



A homeless person sleeps outside an hotel in Athens, Saturday Jan. 12, 2013. Greece's parliament approved early Saturday a new tax bill to ensure the disbursement of the next tranche of international rescue loans aiming to lift the debt-laden country onto the path of recovery.

(AP Photo/Dimitri Messinis)

mess," said Geoffrey Pazzanese, who manages an international stock fund at Federated Investors.

The worst is likely over, most investors say. And that's where any agreement ends. A lot appears to be going right in Europe's financial markets. Greece is no longer a threat, banks are looking stronger, and government borrowing costs are down. Yet Europe's economy remains in a slump. The 17 countries that share the euro currency recently slid into their second recession in three years, and the European Union's statistical agency reported Tuesday that the unemployment rate had

came in September when the European Central Bank pledged to stand behind the hardest hit countries and protect the euro currency. Mario Draghi, the head of the ECB, said the bank would buy the bonds of struggling governments once they sought rescue loans and agreed to the terms. "Thanks to the ECB, people now expect that if you buy a government bond you'll get paid back in full on time and in the right currency," says David Kelly, chief global strategist at J.P. Morgan's money-management group. Before the central bank hatched the plan, bond buyers weren't entirely sure

year, Italy's 8 percent. Germany's DAX index reached a five-year high this month. Hedge funds and other big money managers from around the world have started warming up to the region, putting billions into European stock funds for all but one of the past eight weeks, according to fund tracker EPFR.

Even after those recent gains, stock markets across Europe still appear cheap by standard measures. The typical company trades at less than 12 times its earnings over the next year and 6 times its cash flow. For U.S. companies, the same averages are 13 and 8.

To Kelly, there's a good rea-

Hostess finds a new home for Wonder brand



Twinkies are displayed at the Hostess Brands' bakery in Denver.

(AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

CANDICE CHOI
AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hostess has found a new home for most of its breads, including Wonder, Nature's Pride and Merita.

The bankrupt company maker of Twinkies, Devil Dogs and other snack cakes said late Friday that it selected bids by rival bakery Flower Foods Inc. to buy the breads for \$390 million. Flower Foods, based in Thomasville, Georgia, is best known for Tastykakes but also makes breads including Nature's Own and Cobblestone Mill.

Hostess is expected to announce buyers for its famed dessert cakes over the next several weeks. The company has said it has received interest for its brands from a wide variety of parties, including national supermarket chains and the makers of brand name packaged foods.

Flower Foods was selected as the "stalking horse" bidder for the bread brands. That means higher competing bids can still be made and the final deal must be approved in bankruptcy court. The company made two separate bids for the Hostess breads; a \$360 million bid for Wonder, Nature's Pride, Butter-nut, Home Pride and Merita, along with 20 bakeries and 38 depots. Another \$30 million bid was made for Beefsteak.

Taken together, Hostess said those breads generated just under \$1 billion in sales last year, with Wonder bread accounting for about half of that. Flower Foods, which generates about \$3 billion in annual sales, said it expects the deals to be accretive to its earning this year. □



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With almonds' rising revenues, land values go nuts

GOSIA WOZNIACKA

Associated Press

FRESNO, California (AP) —

Bill Enns, a central California real estate agent specializing in farmland, fields dozens of calls every week from potential buyers. Many want almond, pistachio or walnut orchards — or any land suitable for growing nut trees.

This summer in Merced County, Enns brokered the sale of 1,200 acres (480 hectares) of open ground lacking a good source of water. Listed at \$12,500 per acre (0.4 hectares), the land attracted dozens of buyers and sold within a month for a whopping \$15,000 per acre. The buyer will plant it with almond trees, a notably water-intensive crop.

"It was one of the highest sales per acre that we've seen for that kind of land," said Enns, vice president of the Farm Lands Department at Pearson Realty. "We've seen some numbers that would just blow your mind."

In recent years, farmers in California's Central Val-

ley have seen record-high revenues, buoyed by high demand for fruits, nuts and vegetables in the U.S. and abroad. Investors both for-

sure rates.

California's almond industry, which grows about 80 percent of the global almond supply and 100 per-



Bees pollinate almond trees at an orchard near Bakersfield, Calif. In 2011, for the first time ever, the value of the California almond crop surpassed the state's iconic grape industry to move into second place, behind dairy, making almond producing land one of the highest priced and most sought-after in the region. The demand for almonds is driven largely by the newly-minted money-spending middle classes in China and India.

(AP Photo/Gosia Wozniacka)

leign and domestic have taken notice, buying up farmland and driving up agricultural land values in a region with some of the highest residential foreclo-

cent of the domestic supply, saw the most dramatic growth — powered by strong demand from new money-spending middle classes in India and China.

The growth has prompted a rush for almond-growing land and pushed almond land values through the roof.

Farmland prices have been mostly rising for the past decade throughout the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But over the past three years, despite the recession, they reached record highs.

"A lot of people thought values in farmland would drop like the values in housing," said Allan Barros, a Fresno-area appraiser. "But the sellers ... sat on their properties and farmland values didn't budge. Everybody gave a sigh of relief." Then land values went sharply up, Barros said, pushed by rising agricultural revenues. In this region with the highest farm receipts in the U.S., prices for most commodities rose dramatically. Revenues for almonds and walnuts increased by 30 percent between 2010 and 2011, and revenues for grapes rose by 20 percent, according to the USDA. California's agricultural exports during that

time grew by more than \$3 billion.

In 2011, for the first time, the value of California's almond crop surpassed the state's iconic grape industry to move into second place, behind dairy, as the state's top commodity. Almond producers increased their productivity and their orchard sizes, and shipments more than doubled over the past 10 years, according to the California Almond Board. During the 2011-2012 crop year, California farmers brought in \$3.9 billion in revenue.

Almonds also became the top export, outpacing dairy and wine, mostly due to increased demand from Asia and a weak dollar, almond producers say. Two-thirds of the almonds produced today are shipped overseas. Putting money in farmland pays off, said Biff Ourso, portfolio manager at the New York-based financial services firm TIAA-CREF, because it can generate an income and appreciate over time. But it also brings much-needed diversification. □

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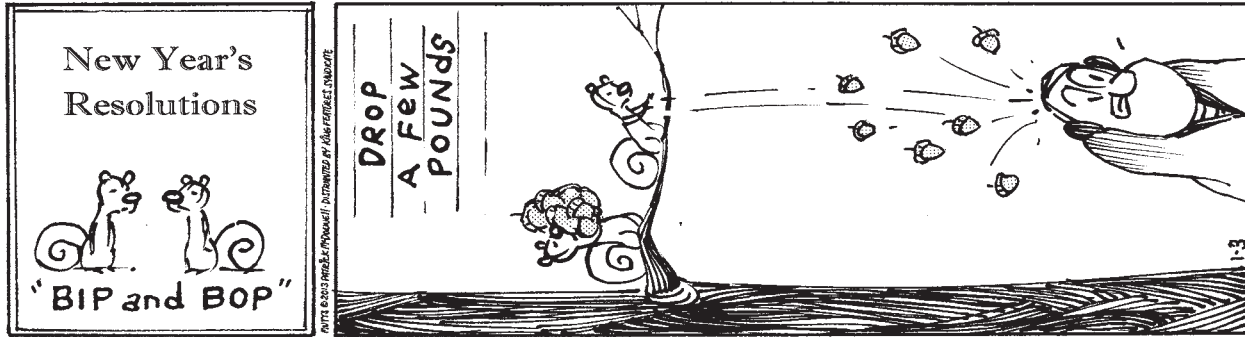
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Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	3		1			6		
9								
			5	9	3			2
7		2	3			5		
		4				9		
		9			6	3		1
8			9	5	4			
								7
		5			7		3	

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/03

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

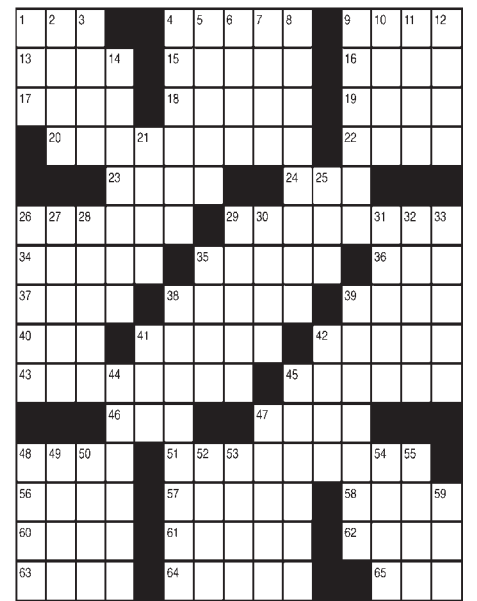
9	8	3	7	4	5	6	2	1
4	5	6	2	1	3	7	9	8
2	7	1	8	6	9	5	3	4
3	9	8	4	2	6	1	7	5
1	4	2	5	7	8	3	6	9
7	6	5	3	9	1	8	4	2
6	2	7	1	8	4	9	5	3
8	3	4	9	5	7	2	1	6
5	1	9	6	3	2	4	8	7

ACROSS

- Desert fruit
- Monsters
- Upper limits
- Cain's victim
- Piece of garlic
- Zone
- Eat
- Heavy volumes
- Male deer
- Mariners
- Bit of land in the ocean
- Dark blue
- Actor _____ McKellen
- Suitcase
- Pops the question
- Happening
- Keel over
- Tit for _____
- Piece of jewelry
- Plays miniature golf
- Gerbil's home
- Papa
- Migratory birds of Canada
- Fairy tale
- In a crazy way
- Found a new purpose for
- Piece of china
- _____ and pepper
- Stylish
- Meanness
- Seldom seen
- Possessed
- Unprocessed metals
- Upon
- Depart
- African river
- _____ over; stooped
- Lawn trimmer
- Make a choice

DOWN

- Latest craze
- Wading bird
- Autry or Kelly
- Series of eight piano keys
- "Old _____"; flag of the U.S.A.
- Italy's capital
- Hardly _____; seldom
- Regular meetings
- Gambling house
- Drawing and painting
- Ring out
- Wise man
- Atilt
- Quick
- Likely
- "Rigoletto" composer
- Of birds
- Gives to a borrower
- Pushover
- Ceremony
- Punctures
- Large bird of prey
- Spirited horse
- Gas or coal
- Tiny opening to spy through
- Carefulness



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

1/3/13

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

BLOW	MALTS	PROD
ROPE	OMAHA	LOGE
ABED	RECEPTACLE	
DEN	NONE	ASKED
	HOUND	RUM
PRAWNS	FINALE	
LANES	ENACT	IRA
ODDS	SLOTH	STOW
DIE	MOLDS	SWED
ODIOUS	SEARED	
	NIL	MALTA
PRESS	BOIL	TIN
LIMITATION	SURE	
ALMS	CREST	TROT
NEAT	TIRES	YENS

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1/3/13

- African antelope
- Collapsed
- Take; agree to
- Football player from Oakland
- Allen or Jobs
- Grouchy person
- Detest
- Press, as clothing
- Had debts
- Unexpected obstacle
- Threatsome
- Sharp shrill cry
- _____ up; arrange

A disconnect between violence and television

DAVID BAUDER
AP Television Writer
PASADENA, California
(AP) — If there's any soul-searching among top television executives about on-screen violence contributing to real-life tragedies like the Connecticut school shooting, it isn't readily apparent.

All say the horrors of Newtown and Aurora, Colorado, rocked them. But during a series of meetings with reporters here over the last 10 days, none offered concrete examples of how it is changing what they put on the air, or if that is necessary.

"I'm not a psychologist, so I'm not sure you can make the leap (that) a show about serial killers has caused the sort of problems with violence in our country," said Robert Greenblatt, who put "Dexter" on the air when he ran the pay cable TV network Showtime and is now overseeing development of a series on the notorious creep Hannibal Lecter for NBC.

"There are many, many other factors, from mental illness to guns."

All of those points are being considered by Vice President Joe Biden as he prepares to make recommendations Tuesday to President Barack Obama on ways to curb violence. When entertainment executives met with Biden in Washington on Friday, makers of blood-spurting video games like "Call of Duty" and "Mortal Kombat" dominated attention. In theaters, "Texas Chainsaw 3-D" dominated box office receipts during its first week.

Television's biggest influence is its omnipresence; the average American watches more than four hours of television a day. In recent days, only FX President John Landgraf said he was in favor of further study about any correlation between entertainment and real violence.



In this file image released by FX, a scene is shown from the FX original series, "Sons of Anarchy." Associated Press

Previous studies have been mixed.

Landgraf has sons aged 15, 12 and 9 and said he doesn't let them play video games in which the player is shooting. □



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Report says warming is changing U.S. daily life



This photo April 17, 2012 file photo shows Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson during an interview with The Associated Press at EPA Headquarters in Washington. Jackson, The Obama administration's chief environmental watchdog, is stepping down after a nearly four-year tenure marked by high-profile brawls over global warming pollution, the Keystone XL oil pipeline, new controls on coal-fired plants and several other hot-button issues that affect the nation's economy and people's health.

SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Global warming is already changing America from sea to rising sea and is affecting how Americans live, a massive new federally commissioned report says.

A special panel of scientists convened by the government issued Friday a 1,146-page draft report that details in dozens of ways how

climate change is already disrupting the health, homes and other facets of daily American life. It warns that those disruptions will increase in the future.

"Climate change affects everything that you do," said report co-author Susan Cutter, director of the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute at the University of South Carolina. "It affects where you live, where you work and

where you play and the infrastructure that you need to do all these things. It's more than just the polar bears."

The blunt report takes a global environmental issue and explains what it means for different U.S. regions, for various sectors of the economy and for future generations.

The National Climate Assessment doesn't say what should be done about global warming. White House science adviser John Holdren writes that it will help leaders, regulators, city planners and even

farmers figure out what to do to cope with coming changes.

And climate change is more than hotter temperatures, the report said.

"Human-induced climate change means much more than just hotter weather," the report says, listing rising-seas, downpours, melting glaciers and permafrost, and worsening storms. "These changes and other climatic changes have affected and will continue to affect human health, water supply, agriculture, transportation, energy, and many other aspects of society."

The report uses the word "threat" or variations of it 198 times and versions of the word "disrupt" another 120 times.

If someone were to list every aspect of life changed or likely to be altered from global warming, it would easily be more than 100, said two of the report's authors.

The report, written by team of 240 scientists, is required every four years by law. The first report was written in 2000. No report was issued while George W. Bush was president. The next one came out in 2009. This report, paid for by the federal government, is still a draft and not officially a government report yet. Officials are seeking public comments for the next three months.

"There is so much that is already happening today," said study co-author Katharine Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. "This is no longer a future issue. It's an issue that is staring us in the face today" This version of the report is far more blunt and confident in its assessments than previous ones, Hayhoe said:

"The bluntness reflects the increasing confidence we have" in the science and day-to-day realities of climate change.

The report emphasizes that man-made global warming is doing more than just altering the environment we live in, it's a threat to

our bodies, homes, offices, roads, airports, power plants, water systems and farms.

"Climate change threatens human health and well-being in many ways, including impacts from increased extreme weather events, wildfire, decreased air quality, diseases transmitted by insects, food and water, and threats to mental health," the report said.

"Climate change and its impacts threaten the well-being of urban residents in all 13 regions of the U.S.," the report said. "Essential local and regional infrastructure systems such as water, energy supply, and transportation will increasingly be compromised by interrelated climate change impacts."

For example, the report details 13 airports that have runways that could be inundated by rising sea level. It mentions that thawing Alaskan ground means 50 percent less time to drill for oil.

And overall it says up to \$6.1 billion in repairs need to be made to Alaskan roads, pipelines, sewer systems, buildings and airports to keep up with global warming.

Sewer systems across America may overflow more, causing damages and fouling lakes and waterways because of climate change, the report said. The sewer overflows into Lake Michigan alone will more than double by the year 2100, the report said.

While warmer weather may help some crops, others will be hurt because of "weeds, diseases, insect pests and other climate change-induced stresses," the report said. It said weeds like kudzu do better with warmer weather and are far more likely to spread north.

"Several populations - including children, the elderly, the sick, the poor, tribes and other indigenous people - are especially vulnerable to one or more aspects of climate change," the report said. □

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Burnett: reality can work without being mean

DAVID BAUDER

AP Television Writer

PASADENA, California

(AP) — Mark Burnett says reality TV shows don't have to be mean to work. The veteran producer of "Survivor" and "The Voice" is working on a new CBS show, "The Job," which premieres on Feb. 8. It depicts candidates applying for jobs at several companies, and takes viewers through the whole nerve-racking experience.

"I think I've proved in the last few years a kinder approach on television does work," said the British-born producer, who was brought on to help at "The Job" by series creator Mi-

chael Davies. Burnett said Saturday that "The Voice" avoids "ripping people for entertainment value" and has "crushed" Fox competitor "The X Factor" as result.

"The Job" also has no intent to humiliate people, producers said.

The first two episodes feature candidates applying for jobs at the Palm restaurant chain and at Cosmopolitan magazine. Future featured companies include Major League Soccer, Epic Records, Live Nation and the online shopping site Gilt.

Five people are competing for jobs in each show. The twist is that after a decision is made, employers

in the same industry sometimes swoop in and claim rejected candidates. Burnett said it's fun to see the reaction of employers when that happens.

"Everybody wants what somebody else wants," he said. "When you want to buy a car or a house or go somewhere, you think, 'Should I do it?' and then someone will say, 'Oh, someone else is going to buy that.' You suddenly want it even more. It's great to see the playing field leveled."

Beyond the entertainment value, Davies said viewers will get practical advice on how to apply and interview for jobs. □



Mark Burnett, executive producer of the television reality series "The Job," makes a point during a panel discussion on the show at the CBS Winter TCA Tour at the Langham Huntington Hotel on Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013, in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

Aruhiba Cigars, Aruba's only hand rolled cigars!

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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store

located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort

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'Zero Dark Thirty' captures No. 1 at box office

DERRIK J. LANG

AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Zero Dark Thirty" hunted down the top spot at the box office — and easily won it.

Sony Pictures' controversial Osama bin Laden man-hunt drama nabbed first place with \$24 million in its first weekend in wide release, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The film, which opened in a limited run last month, earned five Oscar nominations last week, including best picture, original screenplay and actress for Jessica Chastain as a dogged CIA operative.

Open Road Films' horror parody "A Haunted House" starring Marlon Wayans debuted in second place with a solid \$18.8 million. The Warner Bros. mobster drama "Gangster Squad," starring Josh Brolin and Ryan Gosling as off-the-books police officers battling a mob boss played by Sean Penn, opened below expectations in third place with \$16.7 million.

After earning Oscar nominations last week, several Academy Awards contenders benefited at the box office. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences moved up the unveiling of the Oscar nominations to Thursday, three days ahead of Sunday's Golden Globes, Hollywood's second-biggest awards ceremony organized by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.



This undated publicity photo released by Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. shows Jessica Chastain, as Maya, a member of the elite team of spies and military operatives stationed in a covert base overseas, who secretly devoted themselves to finding Osama Bin Laden in Columbia Pictures' new thriller, "Zero Dark Thirty," directed by Kathryn Bigelow. Chastain received an Academy Award nomination for best actress for her portrayal of the young, obsessed CIA operative driving the search.

Associated Press

"The timing is great because there are a host of these awards contenders still out there," said Paul Dergarabedian, box office analyst at Hollywood.com. "'Django Unchained,' 'Les Misérables,' 'Lincoln,' 'Silver Linings Playbook' and a few others are still out there. Which movies win tonight at the Golden Globes will definitely receive a boost going forward."

At the Golden Globes, "Zero Dark Thirty" will be up

against "Argo," "Django Unchained," "Life of Pi" and "Lincoln" in the best motion picture drama category. It's also competing against those films for the best picture prize at the Oscars ceremony on Feb. 24, as well as "Amour," "Beasts of the Southern Wild," "Les Misérables" and "Silver Linings Playbook." "Les Misérables" and "Silver Linings Playbook" were nominated for Golden Globes in the separate best motion

picture musical or comedy category.

Controversies surrounding "Zero Dark Thirty," which depicts waterboarding and other harsh interrogation methods, may have helped create buzz for the film. Several lawmakers accused the CIA of misleading "Zero Dark Thirty" filmmakers by allegedly telling them such interrogation methods helped track down terrorist mastermind bin Laden in 2011.

"There are so many facets of 'Zero Dark Thirty' that have created interest in it," said Rory Bruer, head of distribution at Sony. "Ultimately, it's a great film. That's the piece that you really need to have to get this great of a result. I think it's a film that's not only going to do well in the marketplace but also be talked about for years to come."

The weekend's third place finisher, "Gangster Squad," similarly attracted controversy last year after the mass shooting at an Aurora, Colorado, movie theater left 12 dead. Warner Bros. pulled the movie's trailer and delayed the release out of sensitivity because the film originally featured a scene with mobsters ruthlessly shooting into a movie theater audience.

The entire sequence featuring Brolin's character being ambushed inside famed Hollywood movie palace Grauman's Chinese Theater was removed from "Gangster Squad" and replaced with a new scene, which cost millions of dollars to reshoot, set in Los Angeles' Chinatown neighborhood. The rest of the film's many bullet-riddled Tommy gun battles remained intact.

"There's nothing that indicates violence was an issue," said Jeff Goldstein, general sales manager at Warner Bros. "I don't think that's the case here. The exit polling tells us that people liked what they saw in 'Gangster Squad.' I think we'll have a nice hold going into the holiday weekend where people will be more available and have more leisure time."

Internationally, "Life of Pi" dominated in 68 territories with \$35.8 million, bringing its worldwide total to \$452.1 million. "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" followed closely behind with \$35.1 million in 62 territories. The worldwide total for the first "Hobbit" chapter is now \$886.1 million. "Les Mis" earned \$35.6 million in 23 territories, giving it a \$234.3 million worldwide total. □

Olivia Wilde and Jason Sudeikis engaged to marry

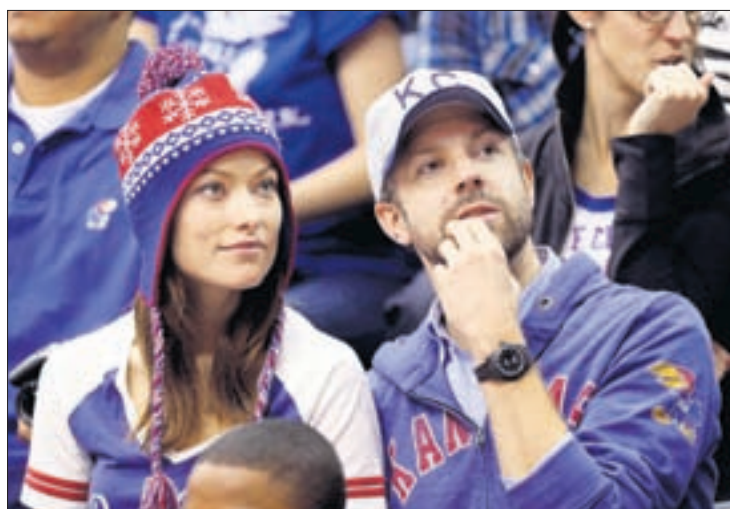
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Olivia Wilde and Jason Sudeikis are getting married.

A spokeswoman for Wilde confirmed Saturday that the couple is engaged. Joy Fehily released no other details.

The engagement was first reported by People.com. This will be the second wedding for both actors. Wilde finalized her divorce from documentarian Tao Ruspoli in 2011 after eight

years of marriage. Sudeikis was previously married to "Pitch Perfect" screenwriter Kay Cannon. They divorced in 2010.

Wilde, 28, rose to fame on TV's "House M.D." Her film credits include "Tron: Legacy" and "Cowboys & Aliens." Sudeikis, 37, is a star of "Saturday Night Live." He hosted the MTV Movie Awards in 2011 and appeared in the film "Horrible Bosses" that same year. □



In this Dec. 29, 2012 file photo provided by Kansas University, actress Olivia Wilde, left, and actor Jason Sudeikis watch Kansas play American in an NCAA college basketball game in Lawrence, Kan.

Associated Press

Flu: Who Knew?



GAIL COLLINS

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Everybody is talking about the flu. Never have I seen so many people trying to open doorknobs with their elbows. "Epidemic spurs rush to hospitals," announced the New York Post under a "Flu York" front-page headline. A financial website offered a list of undervalued stocks in the funeral service industry. The mayor of Boston declared a public health emergency. Google Flu Trends painted a map of the country in deep red and inspired a raft of terrifying predictions. ("Outbreak could be the worst on record.") It's hard to tell the extent of a flu outbreak because most of the victims just snivel away unhappily in the privacy of their own homes. The Google site solves this problem by tracking the number of times people search for flu-related terms online. Does this make sense to you, people? If we could determine what was going on in the world by the most popular searches, wouldn't the universe be run by mischievous kittens and Kate Middleton? OK, that is not a sophisticated thought – Google has an algorithm. But I still wonder if the number of recent searches on the subject of flu isn't related to the number of recent news conferences about flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls Google Flu Trends "a useful tool" that may be "subject to the perturbations of media attention."

It's hard for the media, or the elected officials who are currently terrifying their constituents with dire flu warnings, to know where to draw the line between encouraging preparedness and scaring the public out of its wits. The flu is incredibly debilitating, especially this year because it's showing up at the same time as a stomach virus that features diarrhea and projectile vomiting. Truly, you only need to mention "projectile vomiting" once to get our attention. And flu can be dangerous for some people, like the frail elderly.

But we do go through this every winter.

"This is the worst flu season we've seen since 2009," said Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, the guy who declared the public health emergency.

Stop there. While 2009 was a very bad year for flu, worst-in-four-years doesn't sound quite as dire as worst-on-record.

"We have an epidemic of flu

every year," said the New York City health commissioner, Thomas Farley. If there are alarming headlines, he added, it's because public officials are "trying to get out the message to get your vaccine." In a phone interview, Farley explained that the city declares an epidemic when more than 5 percent of the people going to emergency rooms are complaining of flu symptoms, which is unusual only in the sense that it doesn't happen in warm weather. He also managed to work "get your vaccine" into virtually every sentence.

Yes! Get a flu shot, like Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, who received one Thursday, along with a lollipop. This was to set a good example. Although honestly, that was sort of late in the game, don't you think? You'd like to believe the governor of one of the most populous states in the nation would have thought about flu protection in November.

The CDC, which measures epidemics in a different way, also agrees we're in one. But officials there don't seem all that worried, beyond the fact that when you're the Centers for Disease Control, you're always worried. "The bottom line: It's flu season," said the director, Thomas Frieden.

Maybe the national uber-angst is because the last two years were really light ones for flu, and we've forgotten what it feels like. Also, it's possible that we're talking about it more because there isn't all that much going on. In other Januaries, we might have been anticipating the actions of the new Congress. This year, we know in advance that there won't be any.

This brings me to my theory about how to calm the flu panic. We can pin everything on John Boehner, the speaker of the House.

Think about it. One of the worst side-effects of illness is the feeling of a lack of control. Your symptoms seem to descend out of nowhere. Picking somebody to hold responsible gives a little more sense of order to the universe.

"Nothing will make you feel better like finding somebody to blame," says a new Facebook app called "Help, My Friend Gave Me the Flu." That app, which is sponsored by a pharmaceutical company, lets you prow through the social network looking for which of your acquaintances got symptoms before you did.

This sounds like a terrible idea – you don't want to ruin friendships over a transient ailment. John Boehner, on the other hand, is somebody you have never met. And the average case of the flu, no matter how unpleasant, is not as bad as two or three more fiscal cliffs.

Plus, so many people are angry at John Boehner already that he would never notice a few million more. □



How To Shoot A Gun



JOE NOCERA

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LEXINGTON, Ky. – It was the middle of the workday – a bright, chilly Wednesday afternoon in Lexington, Ky. – but Bud's Gun Shop was crowded. Why was I surprised?

The combination of President Barack Obama's re-election and the Newtown massacre has caused gun proponents to stock up, fearing, against all available evidence, that the federal government was about to crack down on gun ownership. As I opened the door, I felt like a teenager about to buy a condom.

My plan was to shoot a gun, something I had never done before. I thought it would help me understand why gun owners are so passionate about their deadly possessions.

The daughter of a local friend, Don McNay, offered to accompany me. Gena Bigler is the chief financial officer of her father's financial firm, a personal finance columnist and the mother of two. Gena, Don said, is "very liberal in all her politics, except pro-gun." Just like his wife, his ex-wife and many other women in Kentucky, he added.

Bud's Gun Shop was cavernous, with scarcely a square inch of wall space that didn't have a

gun on it. As we headed for the shooting range, I asked Gena why she liked guns. "In the Old West," she said, "the gun was the great equalizer. I think for women that is still the case." The first time she shot a gun, she told me, she was 8.

"Let's start easy," Gena said as we approached the shooting range. At the counter, Dave, a retired policeman who served as the "range officer," brought out a Ruger Mark .22 semi-automatic handgun. It was a gun that a newbie like me could handle, he gently suggested.

A box of bullets in hand, we headed out to the shooting range.

The target was a bright green human silhouette. Gena and I took turns shooting. It took awhile, but once I got the hang of it, I stopped worrying about the shape of the target and focused on hitting it. The .22 made small bullet holes. Gena told me that when she used to shoot in the woods, you could see the enormous damage guns could do to a tree. "I think children need to be better educated about guns," she said, "so they'll understand better what a gun can do."

We next moved to a .45 semi-automatic handgun. "Do you want one that shoots really well, or do you want one you can hide?" asked Dave. He gave us a Kimber. Its manufacturer describes Kimbers as "no compromise, purpose-built pistols." Certainly from my point of view, it was more difficult to ignore its purpose than with the .22. The bullets made much bigger holes, fire often came out of the barrel, and it had a big kick. It was meant to kill people.

The gallery was filling up. I saw two women shooting handguns, three young men sharing an assault weapon, and a man who needed crutches taking target practice. The only noise you

could hear was the pop, pop, pop of guns being fired.

Finally, Gena and I rented a Kriss Vector, a shiny black assault weapon. The man who handed it to us called it a "PDW" – or personal defense weapon. "This gun is made for something like the Secret Service," he added. Dave looked at the gun and smiled wryly. "Blast away," he said. The gun had a 30-bullet magazine, which I emptied as quickly as my trigger finger would allow. It took, literally, seconds.

Using the assault weapon was a frightening experience. Even Gena thought so.

"I don't see why anybody would need a gun like that," she said. But when I asked her whether such guns should be outlawed, she didn't hesitate: "That's the beginning of the slippery slope." Did I discover on Wednesday afternoon why shooting a gun appeals to so many people? Not really. But I did get a glimpse of why it will be so difficult to change America's gun culture. You can say until you're blue in the face that a gun owner or his family is far more likely to be hurt or killed by that gun than an intruder. But people like Gena – decent, honorable citizens who grew up around guns – will never believe it. They will always think of guns as the great equalizer. According to The Cincinnati Enquirer, Kentucky, which has some of the least restrictive gun laws on the books, has no intention of tightening its laws after Newtown.

A few days later, I called Bud's Gun Shop to ask Dave what he thought about the renewed effort to regulate guns. In his calm, unflustered way, he said he thought the problem was mental health care, not guns. "People have rights," he said.

In the background, I could hear the pop, pop, pop of guns going off in the shooting range. □

Obama's 2nd inauguration smaller, yet still grand

NEDRA PICKLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's second inauguration is shaping up as a high-energy celebration smaller than his first milestone swearing-in, yet still designed to mark his unprecedented role in American history with plenty of eye-catching glamour. A long list of celebrity performers will give the once-every-four-years rite of democratic passage the air of a star-studded concert, from

pated fashion statement of the second Obama administration. A new element of the inaugural events will be announced next week, with the appointment of around half a dozen "citizen co-chairs," community leaders from across the country chosen because they represent the president's accomplishments and commitments. They will take part in inaugural events throughout the weekend. Estimates of turnout are

enthusiasm remains high. A limited offering of \$60 inaugural ball tickets for the general public sold out quickly, and inauguration planners have tried to crack down on the scalping business that's sprung up online. There's an impressive list of celebrities, including Beyonce, Katy Perry and Usher, who have signed on to perform. While organizers said Obama was cutting back the number of balls from 10 last time to just two this

tion. Steve Kerrigan, president and CEO of the Presidential Inaugural Committee, said that just because the festivities are going to be smaller doesn't mean they are going to be any less significant. "What we've been seeing from the very beginning is a passion and energy for this inaugural because people want to be a part of history," Kerrigan said. "This is a moment that's only happened 56 other times."

would go back to Thomas Jefferson in 1805," said presidential historian Leo Ribuffo of George Washington University. "Presidents are often reflecting on accomplishments of the administration and the challenges that will continue into the second term." There are 550 people working for the Presidential Inaugural Committee, 1,300 members of the military coming in support roles and countless security officials, including police from multiple agencies and Secret Service providing security. The cost is high: Tens of millions of dollars in donations typically are raised to pay for the parade and parties, more than \$1 million is appropriated by Congress for the swearing-in ceremony and security costs are kept under wraps but also covered by taxpayers. The Presidential Inaugural Committee is setting up a fair on the National Mall to encourage service that day and beyond and has staff working in all 50 states to coordinate local programs. Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and their families plan to personally participate in projects in Washington. Also on Saturday, first Lady Michelle Obama and Biden's wife, Jill, are set to host a concert for America's children as they did four years ago. Popular young artists are putting on a show and tickets are being distributed to Washington schoolchildren, among others. The concert will pay special tribute to military families as part of the two women's focus on supporting their service and sacrifice. At noon on Sunday, Jan. 20, the time the Constitution requires the new term to begin, Obama plans to take his official oath in the White House's Blue Room with some media coverage, while Biden plans an official swearing in at the Naval Observatory. The public ceremony is not being held until the next day because inaugurations historically have not been held on Sundays. □



In this Jan. 20, 2009, photo, Barack Obama takes the oath of office, as his wife Michelle, holds the Lincoln Bible and daughters Sasha, right and Malia, watch at the U.S. Capitol in Washington. Obama's second inauguration is shaping up as a high-energy celebration smaller than his first milestone swearing-in, yet still designed to mark his unprecedented role in American history. (AP Photo/Chuck Kennedy, Pool)

the bunting-draped west front of the Capitol, where Obama takes the oath Jan. 21, to the Washington Convention Center, which is expected to be packed with 40,000 ball-goers that evening. The first family will lead a parade of clanging bands, elaborate floats and marchers, including costumed dancers, prancing horses and military units, down Pennsylvania Avenue. The president will dance with the first lady, whose dress seems destined to be most antici-

600,000 to 800,000, compared with the 1.8 million in the record crowd on the National Mall four years ago to see the first swearing in of a black president. The mood of this 57th inauguration will be tempered by the weak economy, high unemployment, the aftermath of the Connecticut elementary school shooting and the long war in Afghanistan that's expected to require U.S. combat forces through the end of next year. Yet recent developments have shown that inaugural

year, The Associated Press has learned that they are expecting more than 35,000 to attend the larger of the two and 4,000 to attend a ball in honor of U.S. troops — double the size of four years ago. Another factor that could increase turnout is the unseasonably warm weather in Washington. Early forecasts indicate that Obama will be taking the oath of office while the temperature is in the 40s Fahrenheit (between 5 and 10 degrees Celsius), with hardly any chance of precipita-

Obama's speech gives him a moment to command the world's attention on a level that's rare even for a president. If history is any guide, Obama will try to put behind the divisive election. He has the State of the Union policy speech to Congress three weeks later to make his points on taxes, guns, immigration and other issues. It's a good bet this day will be a patriotic love letter to America. "Second inaugurals are often a kind of victory lap speech in a lot of ways, that